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IRENE DWEN ANDREWS

A
MONTH IN MAYO,
COMPRISING
CHARACTERISTIC SKETCHES
(SPORTING AND SOCIAL)
OF
IRISH LIFE;
WITH
MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS.

BY GEORGE ROOPER,

AUTHOR OF 'FLOOD, FIELD, AND FOREST;' 'TALES AND SKETCHES,'
'THAMES AND TWEED,' ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

I ASSUME that the preface to a book, if read at all, is read after the perusal of the book itself ;—it is assuredly so written. It seems therefore to savour of impertinence, or at least of a waste of the reader's time, to obtrude a long detail of the author's intentions upon one who is at the time in a position to judge how far he has succeeded, or otherwise, in carrying them out.

In the following pages, as in all my other little works, my object has been to impart such knowledge on the subjects of sporting and natural history as I believe myself to have acquired.

Some time ago I resided, during a portion of each year, in a wild corner of County Mayo, where I had purchased a tract of five thousand acres, and where I rented, for thirty pounds a year, on a long lease, the shooting over upwards of thirteen thousand acres more, and which I enjoyed

until Irish shootings rose in value, when I was informed that my lessor had no title whatever to the property.

During this period I had many opportunities of studying the habits and customs of the "natives," and I have embodied, in the guise of a partly imaginative narrative, not a few of my personal reminiscences. My former books have, I am proud to say, received as much praise as I could desire, and far more than I ever expected or even hoped for, from young people of both sexes, and it is to them more especially that I now commend my "MONTH IN MAYO."

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A MONTH IN MAYO.

CHAPTER I.

THE LODGE.

"WHEN will I be back for yer 'onner?" inquired the car-driver, as he handed from out the "well" of the car a gun-case with my name and address legibly printed on it, a fishing-case, portmanteau, dressing-bag, and bundle of wraps and waterproofs. "When will I be back for yer 'onner?" There was reason in the question, for, as Tim expressed it, "Divil a sowl that had the English, or knew what dhrink meant, barrin' butthermilk and potheen, or had slept out of a cabin—not maning his Rivir-ince or his 'onner—was there within thirty miles of Bogleeze."

Tim spoke truth: there was not a church, nor a house, nor a shop, nor a post-office, nor any other token of civilization within that distance of the lone lodge at which, on the strength of a general but

hearty invitation from an old friend of my father, I, a Cambridge *man* (?), had just been shot off.

"Let me see," said I; "this is Thursday—come down for me, will you, on Wednesday?"

"Shure I will, yer 'onner; I'll not fail."

"Tim, you thief of the world!" roared a voice from the clouds. "Tim, you thundering vagabond!"

"That's me, shure enough; long life to yer 'onner, I'm moighty glad to see ye looking so fresh and hearty."

"Do ye see *this*, Tim, you murtherin' villain?"

"I do, yer 'onner."

"What is it at all?"

"Shure it's the blunderbuss herself; the holy Virgin save us!"

"Now, Tim, by this and by that, and by every book that ever was shut and opened, if you come out to Bogleeze till I send for ye, I'll put the contents of this into ye. Do ye hear *that*, and be d——d to you?"

"Shure, yer 'onner is the gintleman entirely, and I'll not show my face in the demesne till yer 'onner sends for me."

"You're a good boy, Tim; get out of that, will ye, and ask Mrs. Maloney for something to eat; maybe it's hungry you are, Tim?"

"Thank yer 'onner kindly for that same; but it's

mighty little appetite I have at all, and what I have I keep for the dhrink."

"Well, get along in with ye to Misthress Maloney, and see what she's got in her cupboard."

"God bless yer 'onner! Long life to yer 'onner! It's the foine gintleman you are entirely."

The arbitrary speaker, who now descended from the upper regions, out of which his voice had been heard, to welcome his young guest, presented by no means an ordinary appearance. He was at least six feet two in his socks, and his attire, a flowered dressing-gown reaching down to his ankles, made him look even taller than he was; his age some fifty, "or by'r Lady, three score," but hale and hearty, and except by a sprinkling of grey hairs on head and beard, showing little sign of old age; there was a pleasant, kindly expression in his bright eye, which seemed to glitter with suppressed fun and humour, and a joke seemed to be ever playing round the corners of his expressive mouth. To my thinking, he bore upon his face and in his manner the characteristic marks of the Irish gentleman of the day before yesterday—courteous but shrewd, humorous and slightly sarcastic, open, friendly, observant, and discriminating. The warm greeting and implied approval of the personal appearance of the young man before him were

highly flattering, and went straight to a heart ever open to kindness.

“Cead mille failtha ! A hundred thousand welcomes ! I’m right glad to see your father’s son in these wild parts. It’s not in a hurry we’ll let you go, unless you weary of an old man and bad cookery.”

“Old, my dear sir ! you don’t look much older than myself ; and as for cookery, it’s not so long since I left school, where the word was unknown. It’s precious jolly, I tell you, finding myself here, and I’m very much obliged by your receiving me so kindly.”

The car in the meantime had moved off ; the little mare that had trotted, without apparent effort, thirty English miles, having been refreshed by a drink of water and a hatful of corn, was perfectly ready to trot back again, and return that night if required.

“A thousand welcomes, my dear boy !” cried the old man, wringing my fingers, and marshalling the way down a narrow passage to the foot of a rather steep stair.

“Thady ! hurry now ; bring up the luggage and some sherry and biscuits ; and put the rod-case in the hall, and give the gun-case to Larry, and—what is it, you little disciple ?” this to a

ragged, breechless, stockingless, shoeless, capless varlet, some six years old, with sturdy legs, blue eyes, and flaxen, unkempt hair. "What is it you're wanting, you little mischief?"

"Shure, dadda's afther takin' the pledge, and Minnie sent me to ax yer 'onner to sarve him."

"Your Minnie! Why, you young sorrow, Minnie's dead."

"Yes, shure, but dadda's got a new Minnie, and she bid me bring him to yer 'onner to take the pledge."

Here entered a wild-looking man, lightly clad in what was once a shooting-jacket, evidently of English make, but sadly dilapidated, a pair of corduroy breeches loose at the knee, worsted stockings, and strong clouted shoes. He carried an old-fashioned muzzle-loading gun in the hollow of his arm, and at his heels, evidently abashed at the company he was in, but comforted and encouraged by the child's countenance, followed a well-bred, half-starved Irish retriever, a yellowish-brown, curly-haired beast, with hazel eyes and a sandy top-knot, a member of perhaps the wisest race of dogs in existence.

"Well, Larry, what is it? What scrape have you been getting into now, that you want to take the pledge again?"

"Faith, yer 'onner, it's the pledge I'd be after taking and keeping for Katie's sake, and Dinny's there, the crathur."

"Who's Katie?"

"Faith, thin, yer 'onner, she's a little gal that lives foreanent the chapel down beyant there."

"What, Katie McGrath?"

"Just herself, yer 'onner; I'm married upon her since yesterday."

"And why didn't you tell me about it, Larry?"

"Troth and I would, yer 'onner, but thim things are best not talked too much about before they come off. The pledge, yer 'onner?"

"Why, Larry, it's not six months since you took it, for a year and a day, and you were found screaming drunk on your own threshold within a month."

"Faix, thin, and that's throe for yer 'onner, but it was not forsworn I was; I swore not to taste the dhrop 'inside the house nor outside,' and it was sitting on the threshold itself—one leg in and one leg out—that I took an eggshell, or maybe two, of the craythur. It was my sister's wedding."

"But you took the pledge again, Larry, not six weeks since, and you were roaring drunk on Tuesday was a week; you know it, Larry, and you had

sworn not to taste liquor on the face of God's earth or under it."

"That's blessed thruth itself, an' I'd scorn to tell a lie, let alone swearing one. It was in the boll of the ould pollard nut that I sat, when the little dhrop was brought to me : it was the christening, and troth, that same came mighty quick after the wedding!"

"Well, come and take the pledge at once, then, and mind you keep it, or I'll tell his Reverence and your new wife too."

"I, Larry Toole, do solemnly swear——"

"Beg pardon, Mr. Blake," whispered I ; "you've got a volume of the *Sporting Magazine* there, not the——"

"Good enough for him, the blaggard!" was the response, and the newly-married convert to teetotalism departed, deeply imbued with the sanctity of the oath, and resolved to observe it, at least until he could find a specious pretext for breaking it.

Locking his arm in mine, and reiterating words of kindest welcome, the old man now led me down a long passage and up a steep stair to the first floor—the only upper one, in fact—and opening the door, as he passed, of a plainly, but comfortably furnished bedroom, with the brief intimation, "Your den, my dear boy!" ushered me into the

drawing—that is, the sitting—room, as distinguished from the dining-room below. It was a long, low room ; a bay window at the end, facing the west, admitted a flood of mellow light as the setting sun shone on the glittering streams, and alternating black and golden pools of the distant river. The mountains in the background, streaked with silvery stripes, the streams awakened into life by the recent downfall, the dark plantations of firs, and the still purple heathery knolls in the foreground, formed a picture which would have gladdened a painter's eye. But in the immediate foreground, in the deep embrasure of the window, the bright beams of the setting sun illumining her golden hair, and tinting her joyous face, my eye rested on an object that, for the time, excluded any other. I gazed, and as I gazed I felt my fate—my young heart's affections were fixed—irrevocably fixed.

Laugh not, *blasé* boy of the present day ; smile not, sage of the past time : *we* lived in a day when chivalry, or something akin to chivalry, still existed ; when to ride across two counties to inquire of the well-being of “the ball's fair partner,” was as nothing ; when the flash of a bright eye kindled feelings indelible, ineffaceable—until supplemented by other flashes from other bright eyes, when

“ Eyes looked love to eyes that spake again.”

But why expatiate ? *She*, the arbitress, as I felt, of my destiny stood before me,

“ In full, voluptuous, but not o’ergrown bulk.”

Miss Honoria O’Hara, by which name she was introduced by Mr. Blake as, “ My niece,” was, without doubt, considerably my senior—why do boys always fall in love with their grandmothers, whom the rubric forbids them to marry ?—but she was “ beautiful exceedingly ” ; with golden hair and bright blue eyes, a light, elastic tread, and faultless figure, slightly inclining to the *embonpoint*, but above the middle height. She advanced towards me, and at her uncle’s introduction, “ My niece, Miss Honor O’Hara ; my old friend’s son, Mr. Charles —,” she held out her hand with winning frankness. I have seen whiter and smaller hands, but as I took and bowed over it, I mentally swore that never was hand so fair and faultless, and as I pressed it, reverentially, in my own, dubbed myself her true knight from that time for evermore.

“ Shure, Mr. Charles,” said the sweetest voice that ever issued from mortal lips, “ we’ve wearied for ye.”

I murmured out some boyish acknowledgment.

“ I may call you Charlie ”—she pronounced it Chorley—“ may I not ? Your father’s sister-in-law and my mother were first cousins once removed, you know.”

Of course, could there be greater happiness? And so in ten minutes I found myself perfectly at home, and in twenty as much at my ease, barring the intense fire that was kindled in my bosom and consuming my heart, as though I had dwelt in Mayo and under my kind friend's roof all the days of my life.

We had salmon for dinner, fresh, hard, curdy salmon, such as had never before gratified my palate; the sauce, the liquor in which it had been boiled. Was it that Honor had caught the fish, or was it really the most delicious fish I had ever eaten? Speaking calmly, and after long later experience, I pronounce in favour of the reality. No one who has been accustomed to the luscious, half-frozen, half-rotten, ten-days-from-the-water fish, not uncommonly a kelt, which is sold at a fabulous price in London, and eaten with its rich adjunct of lobster sauce and dressed cucumber, can form the least idea of what a salmon fresh from the river and properly dressed is like.*

* The following recipe for cooking fresh salmon is offered to the reader. It is an extract, but I know not from whence:—"Put rather an extra allowance of salt in the water; have your fish, cut in slices of rather less than an inch thick, ready; when the water boils fiercely then throw in an additional handful of salt: this will form a sort of crust, into which plunge the slices. Serve up, with the liquor in which they were boiled for sauce."

"Can ye fish, Charlie?" asked my host.

I confessed my ignorance of the gentle art; but added, to save my credit, I was reckoned a fair shot.

"Never mind, then, Honor shall teach you! There's not a man or a boy, let alone the girls, in the Barony can come near her for tying a fly or throwing one. You'll give him a lesson, Honor darling!"

A smiling assent was returned, and the dinner passed merrily away.

I remember that dinner as though it were yesterday. After the fish, we had an Irish stew and a brace of grouse, a rice pudding with jam tartlets, some capital cheese, and roast chestnuts by way of dessert. Beer or ale there was none, but the whisky was superb, and a bottle of decent sherry left nothing to be desired.

"Are ye for the screw or the kettle, Charlie?" asked my kind host, as the dishes were removed. "Are ye for the screw or the kettle?"

The meaning of the rather enigmatical question dawned at once upon me, and, evidently to his satisfaction, I pronounced in favour of "the kettle."

"Honor darling, make a brew for the two of us;" and the bright girl at once busied herself in the mystic compound: it was delicious! "And now, Honor, sing your old uncle a song."

There was no coy refusal on the young lady's part, but sitting down at once to the piano, she poured forth song after song, mostly Moore's Irish melodies—surely the sweetest songs that ever were set to music.

I hung upon the notes, and listened with my whole soul, as well as with my ears. I was entranced, fascinated, enchanted. No wonder! under the combined influence of music, beauty, Moore's melodies, and whisky punch. Mr. Blake, who had signified his satisfaction, not only by words and by beating time to the airs, but occasionally by joining in the melody, had subsided into a sound slumber, and his snores were rather out of tune; in fact, a drawback to the perfect harmony of the performance, although Miss O'Hara managed to utilize them as far as practicable. He awoke, though late, all too soon, and conducting me to the door of my bedroom left me, with a hearty Irish blessing, to my repose.

CHAPTER II.

“THE SMALL STILL.”

VERY sound were my slumbers, and very fresh I awoke in the morning. Hastily dressing, I sought to examine the premises before my host should have risen. It was still early, but, as I soon found, I was the last, not the first, up. Crossing the paved courtyard, and passing under the rustic arch which formed the entrance to the ill-kept garden, I found Miss Honor, looking, if possible, fresher and lovelier than on the previous evening. An ample scarlet scarf, or cloak, was thrown over her shoulders, and hanging in graceful folds about her person, was twisted in some mysterious manner coquettishly around her head, so as to form a complete covering, or hood, out of which her dark eyes seemed positively to glitter. The rather short petticoats, I had before remarked, conduced to the appearance of grace and activity which every motion betokened. She was gathering parsley, and she held a bunch of that “crisp, curly herb” in

one hand, as she frankly held out the other and warmly greeted me.

"It's the lobsters I'm picking the parsley for," she said. "Do you like lobsters, Mr. Charles?"

"I thought you were not to call me that name," said I.

"Well, Charlie, then, do you like lobsters—fresh lobsters? Have you ever tasted one?"

"Yes, often."

"I daresay, what you call fresh lobsters in London. I never saw one there; they are stale before they are boiled. Wait now till you taste our lobsters, fresh this morning from the Atlantic."

"Why," said I, "they are alive when they are boiled in London; horribly cruel it is, too."

"They're stale for all that; but never mind, Charlie, wait till you've tasted ours!"

We walked together to the room in which we had dined the previous day, and found Mr. Blake already seated at the table. Our English ideas of a breakfast are, after all, very limited; to understand what is meant by the term one must travel northward or westward. For my own part, I had never witnessed a table so furnished with good things before—fish, flesh, and fowl, salmon, chops, and grouse, tea and coffee, eggs, milk, and honey; conspicuous above all, the bright shells of half a

dozen small lobsters, peeping with their round black eyes from their fringe of parsley, and looking like scarlet poppies in a field of green tares ; then there were scones and stirabout, jam and marmalade, fresh butter and clotted cream, brown bread and white, rolls and buttered toast. I did ample justice to pretty nearly all these delicacies, and my youthful appetite evidently raised me in the estimation of my hospitable host.

"Charlie, my dear boy," he said, "I've cut out your day's work for ye. You'll not mind my not asking your leave, but Larry and I were in your room before six this morning, and he said it would be murder to awaken ye ; faith, Charlie, you looked like a snoring cherub."

I blushed, and expressed my gratitude and acquiescence in any plan he was good enough to suggest. It had been arranged that I should shoot my way across the bog—"mountain," Mr. Blake called it—to the Deadman's Pool, so designated from the fact of a poor starved peasant, who, having been found on the bank there, dead from hunger, lay buried, in unhallowed ground, under a large flat stone hard by. At this pool Jemmy, the under keeper, was to meet us with the fishing-rods, and Miss Honor half promised to accompany him and give me my first lesson in the art and

mystery of throwing a fly. Of fishing, save as practised by the patient race of punt-fishers on the silver Thames, I was, as I have said, profoundly ignorant.

Our breakfast over, accompanied by Larry, who was waiting at the gate with a brace of well-fed but rather ragged-looking dogs, coupled together, at his heels, I started forth highly excited at the prospect of my first essay at the two long-wished-for objects of my sporting ambition, grouse shooting and salmon fishing.

Our course, for a considerable distance, lay along the pleasant banks of the river, which, still swollen and turbid from the recent rains, my companion averred would be in fine order for fishing by the afternoon. I cheerfully acquiesced in Larry's suggestion, and trudged cheerily along, elate with hope and brimful of joyous anticipations.

There was indeed everything to exhilarate and encourage one ; the air was fresh and crisp, the sun shone brightly, but not too ardently, the birds were singing their autumnal songs, and the coffee-coloured water came rattling, roaring, dancing down, leaping over the rocks, and constructing huge balls of yellow-tinged foam, which floated merrily along, and, careless of the rapids which vainly sought to engulf them, circled demurely round the outer

edge of the whirlpool and sailed gracefully away, assisting in some quiet corner in the manufacture of a treacherous crust of fictitious solidity. In places the river, struggling through a group of detached rocks, might readily have been crossed dry-foot by an active man; in others, stretching over a great bank of flat shingle, it spread unconfined for sixty yards or more, in a uniform depth of less than a yard. In others, the yellow broom, and the bright red berries of the mountain-ash around the steep rocky banks were reflected in the water; a pair of eagles soared far above our heads, and the water-ouzel, the prettiest and most calumniated* bird that frequents the mountain stream, ever and anon flitted before us, and settling on a nearly submerged stone, faced us with spotless white waistcoat and bright inquiring eye; apparently satisfied by the scrutiny, she sat confidently as we passed, merely jerking her apology for a tail by way of salute. Even the croak of a pair of carrion crows, unwontedly tame, fell musically on *my* ear, but the sound jarred discordantly on that of my companion.

* A long and interesting controversy on the habits of this little bird (*Furdus cinctus*) was carried on a year or two since in the pages of *Land and Water*; the result being its complete vindication from the charge of devouring the eggs of salmon, which had been ignorantly laid to its charge.

"Bad luck to thim crows," he muttered, adding some words in Irish which sounded very like a curse, "not loud, but deep."

To my question he poured out a string of objurgatory ejaculations, I fear but too well merited, against the character of what Waterton termed "the warrior bird."

"He dhrinks the egg, yer 'onner, he murders the young birds, he drives the old grouse from her nest, the thief of the world!"

I fear the accusations are but too true; the hoodie crow, the great pest of the moor, is not content, like the hawk, with killing and devouring the prey he requires for his sustenance, but, like the fox, and some of the weasel tribe, kills for the mere pleasure of killing; and having discovered a nest of eggs or a covey of newly-hatched birds, he will not leave a solitary one, but returns time after time, destroying and hiding what he cannot eat. When, immediately afterwards, I stumbled over a nest built *on the ground** amid the heather, containing

* This is not the only instance I have met with of birds, under difficult circumstances, building in unaccustomed places. I have taken kites' and some species of hawk's eggs from nests built upon the ground; and it may be in the recollection of some of my readers that a pair of kites hatched two eggs on the floor of their wretched cage in the Zoological Gardens. Let the situation of the nest, however, be what it may, the materials and the construction are the same.

four half-fledged young ones, I could hardly object to the summary destruction awarded them by Larry, who hurled the struggling wretches incontinently into the pool below.

As we proceeded, and quitted the banks of the river, walking became more and more difficult ; big stones intercepted the path, masses of rushes encumbered it, and our footsteps alternated between these, coarse heather, and coarser grass ; anon we found ourselves jumping from tussock to tussock, the treacherous half-baked surface intervening, and a mass of bog on each side, which, light as was our tread, quaked for thirty yards on each side as we passed.

Suddenly we come upon a little hillock of burning turf ; the thin white smoke curled gracefully up, and I marvel at its incongruous appearance ; the surrounding surface is wet, nay, floating in water, yet the latent fire seems to struggle gallantly with its natural enemy, and, judging from the deposit of white ashes around, must have struggled for many a day, nay, week, and successfully. In passing, my companion took the opportunity of aiding the unequal contest by heaping together a few lumps of comparatively dry turf which he kicked out of the bog and threw upon the slumbering embers.

Rather puzzled at the apparent meaninglessness of the proceeding, I asked for an explanation.

"Just a thrick, yer 'onner, in regard of the army, the bastes!"

The army, I was aware, meant the police, or that section of them whose especial duty it was to hunt for and to suppress illicit stills, which are frequently discovered by the smoke emitted during the process of making poteen. A few turfs lighted in different parts of the bog, and occasionally replenished by sympathizing passers-by, will keep alight for weeks, nay, months; and it not unfrequently happens that a file of men, after "spotting" the thin curl of smoke, and struggling across two or three miles of rotten bog to reach it, find, as a recompense for their labours, as Larry expressed it, "a little chap in a black jacket smoking his dudeen all alone by himself, and mighty mad it made 'em."

"Were there any illicit stills at work now?" I inquired.

Larry could not say for certain, but he thought the trade was entirely put an end to.

"They're mighty hard upon a poor boy, yer 'onner, who tries to make a penny out of his patch of oats or barley; sure it's a bad business, when a boy's saved a few bushel of oats or barley from the hares, that he mayn't make the most of 'em, instead

of selling it for half nothing, and spending the price in 'parliament,'* bad cess to it!"

Here Larry spat contemptuously, thereby testifying his abhorrence of that legalized decoction—mainly diluted vitriol—known in the west as "parliament whisky," in his reprobation of which I cordially concur. Not having any arguments at hand to confute Larry's specious suggestions, that a man ought not to be prevented from using the talent he is gifted with to the best advantage; that if nature and experience had taught him the art of brewing, and industry had placed the material within his reach, he ought to be permitted to utilize it; that if the exigencies of the state (Larry did not use these expressions exactly) required a duty to be paid, and he was willing to pay it, he ought not to be precluded from doing so in the interests of a grasping monopoly; that if a bushel of raw barley was only worth three shillings, and, when malted and made into whisky, was worth twenty, he ought to be permitted to make it; that good poteen was a delicious and wholesome spirit, and bad "parliament" a nasty and pernicious one, I remained silent, and devoted my attention to picking my way across the dangerous ground. Gradually I

* That is, whisky which has paid duty and sold by "Act of Parliament;" most abominable stuff it frequently is.

edged a little away from the bog, and was following what seemed to be a faint track, leading more directly than the course hitherto pursued towards what I had been told was our ultimate destination.

"This way, yer 'onner!" shouted Larry; "it's bad ground you're coming on—this way." Certainly it did not appear so; on the contrary, the path I had chosen rather inclined up-hill, and the ground became firmer as I advanced. Apparently changing his tactics, Larry suddenly joined me, and assuming a mysterious air, inquired:

"Would yer 'onner like to see a still at work?"

I answered eagerly in the affirmative; and Larry, taking me by the coat sleeve, guided me round a small, unobtrusive pile of turf, and stooping down, ushered me at once into a sort of hut, or cave, filled with smoke, through which a turf fire, apparently distant, but within a few feet of my nose, glared red and angry, like the sun through a November fog in London. As my smarting eyes accommodated themselves to the unwonted atmosphere, I discerned a shapeless cave, or cabin, the roof supported by strips of bog pine, and formed of freshly cut turfs from the adjoining bog; so accurately were they fitted that, had I pursued my path another yard, I should have stepped uncon-

sciously on to the roof, and without doubt been introduced "*sans cérémonie*" to the owner *pro tem.* of the property, to whom I was now more formally presented as "the young gentleman from Bogleeze, a *rale* gentleman, I'll go bail—one would scorn to take advantage of a poor man like Pheenie yonder."

Pheenie, I am bound to say, was as ill-looking a specimen of the human race as it had ever been my lot to encounter; broad shouldered almost to deformity, with a small head, narrow, retreating forehead, and eyes, bleared by the smoke, which looked in any direction excepting that to which their owner presumedly addressed himself. Apparently he was more than half drunk; in fact, the fumes which rose from a sort of pot or caldron beneath which the turf fire was lighted, were sufficient of themselves to affect inconveniently any ordinary brain.

His greeting, however, though rough, was, as is always the case with the Irish peasant under any circumstances, courteous; a bottomless deal box was handed to me as a seat, and an eggshell filled from a jar, into which a sort of pipe, "the worm," I believe it is called, was gradually emptying itself, handed to me, with some expression in an unknown tongue, which I assumed to be a token of

hospitality. Shutting my eyes, perforce, for the rising fumes were very potent, I swallowed the contents, which tasted, to my unaccustomed palate, like liquid fire ; I returned the primitive drinking vessel to Pheenie, with a fervent, but most mendacious, expression of satisfaction, declining a second dose ; the eggshell passed two or three times between Larry and our host, and having presented the latter with half-a-crown, I departed, bearing with me a torrent of what I fondly hoped were blessings, but might have been very much the contrary.

"I didn't think there was a small still left in the country," observed Larry ; "but when I happened on it I just showed yer 'onner in, for I knew it was yerself that was the rale gintleman that would never harm a poor boy doing his best to earn an honest shilling for his mother, and she a widdy."

Possibly my tacit acquiescence in this breach of the excise laws, or the slight taste of the result, had opened Larry's heart ; for, unmindful of his previous assertion that the days of illicit distillation were passed, he recounted several amusing stories of the mode in which the machinations of the "army" had been defeated on various occasions by subtle stratagems, and how the manufacture had been carried on under the very nose of the

persecutors. In one case, the priest's chimney, within a quarter of a mile of the barrack, had been utilized, and in another that of the forcing-house of an English gentleman, who had recently purchased a large property in the neighbourhood, a magistrate, and an active administrator, "bad luck to him," of the laws of his country.

CHAPTER III.

GROUSE SHOOTING.

WE had now reached the ground, considerably elevated, where, from the state of the weather, Larry expected to find the grouse we were in search of. In wet and stormy weather, he said, they went lower, and especially affected the roads, by the sides of which they would sit, tame as chickens, and utterly regardless of the passing cars. Many a Saxon gentleman had been deluded into the notion that the mountain abounded with grouse, from the fact of his seeing every covey which existed for miles around as he drove along.

The dogs which were now uncoupled and encouraged to hunt, were, as I have said, remarkable neither for beauty nor condition, nor did they match as a pair, nor in any respect; Rap, an old heavy-jowled, black-and-tan setter, one-eyed and lame. Don, a half-starved, liver-and-white pointer, with staring coat and hollow flanks. It was, however, evident that they understood their business. While Rap halted along straight ahead on the chance, as

it would seem, of running against a covey, Don cantered backward and forward at a short distance before us, in a very workmanlike style. Rap had not gone far before he came to what he evidently intended as a point. He sat upon his haunches and looked inquiringly over his shoulder. I had reason afterwards to marvel at this dog's extraordinary faculty for finding game, seemingly without looking for it; he would go forth at a long limping trot, in whatever direction seemed good in his eyes, utterly regardless of rate or signal, (indeed, he was almost blind, and quite deaf) but either from reflection, experience, or some inscrutable development of instinct, the line he took was invariably the correct one, and generally terminated, at a greater or less distance, in his dropping down, not rigid, like a pointer, or stiff, like setters in general, but very much at his ease, sitting or lying on the heather, where he remained until my arrival. The birds flushed, he would either rise and proceed on his course, indifferent apparently to the result of the shot, and undoubtedly so as to any wishes of mine on the subject, or he would remain unmoved in the same position; in the latter case, the old hen, or some over-bold young cock, was sure to be found to have tarried behind, and paid the penalty for having done so. On the present occasion Rap sat

on his haunches, evidently aware that grouse were close before him, though he certainly could not see them, light as was the surrounding cover. On coming up I saw the birds plainly enough ; a brace of old grouse, nearly as large as black game, neither frightened nor flurried, and in no hurry to take wing ; the cock, indeed, after scrutinizing my appearance deliberately, ran to the top of a small tussock, and uttered a short semi-defiant chuckle, as though to dispute my right to

“ Molest his ancient, solitary reign.”

These tactics considerably bothered me ; and when, rejecting Larry's counsel that I should shoot him as he stood, I persuaded him to throw a turf at the defiant old bird, I ignominiously missed him and his partner, to Larry's undisguised annoyance, although he only muttered, with that determination to make things pleasant which characterizes the Irish keeper,

“ Faith, but yer 'onner shot quick ; you made them get out of that, anyway ! ” adding, “ next time, yer 'onner, shoot them on the ground, the schamers ! ”

I was, however, too good a sportsman to follow his advice ; it was the novelty of the situation that perplexed me ;

“ Their tameness was shocking to me ; ”

and when, immediately afterwards, Rap indicated the presence of a small covey, I not only brought down a right and left shot, but killed three more birds before he rose from his recumbent position. Irish grouse are not only larger and heavier, but far less wild than their Scotch cousins, and in those days and in that wild district they were very little shot at. I rose rapidly in Larry's estimation, and speedily attained, by a series of successful shots, a high place in it. By the time we had reached the "Deadman's Pool," where Jemmy the under keeper was waiting with a rod, the bag was a tolerably heavy one.

As compared with Highland shooting, the Irish must be considered as very tame work; you may travel for miles without finding a pack of grouse, but when you do meet with one, you may, with tolerable shooting and perseverance, kill every bird in it. I have made a bag of twelve or fifteen brace in a day; but very few mountains with which I am acquainted will furnish many days' sport to that extent, and a greedy shot may destroy sport for many successive seasons. There is not sufficient heather to support a large stock, and, preserve as you may, the number of grouse will always be limited by the quantity of that, their almost exclusive food. One has, however, an equivalent in

the variety of game ; snipe, woodcock, teal, golden plover, wild ducks, hares, brown and grey, are abundant, and quail are occasionally met with. Personally I have never enjoyed shooting in even the best preserved manors so much as on the wild Irish bogs.

While the keepers were putting up my rod, I tried a little patch of rushy ground, not unlikely, I thought, to hold a snipe or a duck. Don came to a point, almost the first that sagacious old Rap had given him a chance of during the day ; it was of far too confident a character, the tail too stiff, the body too rigid, to admit the possibility of any mistake ; game there must be, and close to him, but oddly enough, though I walked backwards and forwards to the utmost limits of the rushes, nothing appeared ; no grouse cackled, no snipe squeaked, no hare plashed out of her wet form. At last, going up to the old dog and looking down almost beneath his nose, I saw, carefully concealed in the rushes, a fine newly-killed salmon, which I took up, and much wondering at the cause of its transportation to so unlikely a spot, conveyed to Larry.

That individual was by no means at a loss to account for an occurrence which had so mystified me :

“The thunderin’ blaggards !” ejaculated he, “the

poachin' thieves! Look now at the gaff-hole!" There was indeed a small ragged hole in the lower part of the fish, and another a few inches above it, which no doubt were caused by the entrance and exit of that destructive instrument of poaching, the barbed gaff.*

Jumping down the bank and narrowly scrutinizing the margin of the water, Larry exclaimed :

"Faith! didn't I know it? it's just hisself—*that's Jim Barrett's great toe*, I'll be sworn on my book oath! Will I get out a summons against him, yer 'onner?"

While debating in my own mind the possibility of convicting Jim Barrett of the crime of gaffing a salmon on the evidence of his great toe, I looked up and saw Miss O'Hara, mounted on a rough

* When will the legislature, which is always tinkering at the salmon laws, making two holes in the kettle while it stops one, prohibit once for all, under severe penalties, the use of this pernicious instrument? No sportsman or fisherman uses one; it is essentially a poacher's weapon, and, deprived of it, half his occupation would be gone. I have urged this point, obvious and uncontradicted as it is, till I am tired of doing so. Of course, no simple mode of prevention, no partially beneficial measure, finds favour in the eyes of legislators; a grand stroke is required, a comprehensive and much-fought scheme for the total abolition of poaching, one that will shed lustre on the head of its projector; yet no one surely can or should object to so simple a measure as the disarming the poacher, especially when it can be done without injury or inconvenience to anyone else.

mountain pony, approaching me; Jim Barrett's great toe—the beautiful fish at my feet—the projected prosecution—passed at once from my mind, and hastening forward, I warmly greeted the young lady, and assisted her to dismount.

CHAPTER IV.

MY FIRST FISH.

SHE sprung lightly from the saddle, dropping as she did so the plaid which had done duty for a skirt, and there was displayed, suspended from the pommel, a small plethoric hamper, containing, as appeared on inspection, relics of our ample breakfast, and in addition, a small bottle of whisky, with a larger one of pure water, a very necessary adjunct, for with "water, water everywhere," there was "not a drop to drink," the much praised coffee-colour, so good for fishing, imparting a decidedly peaty flavour to the pure element. Seated on a pile of rushes, which Larry had hastily gathered, under the shadow of a projecting rock, the river rolling at our feet, the blue mountains in the distance, with ample store of creature comforts, and a youthful appetite to enjoy them, a charming companion by my side, surely I had a right to feel, and felt, exceedingly happy! Those were not days when a young man lighted his cigar and puffed the smoke into a lady's face, so I lay

at Miss O'Hara's feet, and gazing into her face, talked, I fancy to the young lady's amusement, a good deal of nonsense. It is possible she got a little tired of it, for, turning to Larry, who, with the gentlemanlike instinct of an Irishman of any class, had stationed himself at just such a distance as, without interfering with or manifestly overhearing our conversation, removed any appearance of a too-secluded *tête-à-tête*, she brought him, as it were, forward, by the offer of a substantial ham-sandwich.

"I cannot ate it at all, Miss Honor ; sure it's Friday."

"Oh, I forgot ; well, you can eat the bread and butter, at any rate."

"I cannot taste it ; sure it's had mate upon it."

"Oh, nonsense ! his Reverence will never know it."

"He *will* know it, Miss Honor ; his Rivirince knows *everything*."

It is very strange how a naturally clever race, as the Irish peasantry without question is, persists in giving the priesthood credit for supernatural knowledge, when they must be aware that individually and collectively they confess in detail every crime, peccadillo, or sin they commit or are cognizant of.

Some hard-boiled eggs having been substituted (whisky, of course, was out of the question), Larry,

still at a respectful distance, practically made a third in the party.

"So the poachers have been troublesome again, have they, Larry?"

"Troth, your ladyship, Miss Honor, it's troublesome they are, and have been; there was a power of boys in Pwl-na-carrig, the last blessed Sunday night that ever was."

"In Pwl-na-carrig? My uncle's favourite pool! Who were they, Larry?"

"Faith, thin, Miss Honor, I can hardly say for sure; there was a power of boys in it; the Dalys was in it, an' the Barretts, an' the Joyces, an'—"

"Did you see them, then?"

"I did not, Miss Honor, in regard of the black night that was upon us; but I heard them plain enough. There was Jim Barrett, and—"

"It was dark, then?"

"You may say it was dark, Miss Honor; it's God's thruth—dark! if you'd put your finger in your eye you couldn't see to take it out again."

"And you went in at them, did you?" asked I.

"Troth, an' I did not at all; I just stood on the bridge down beyant, and fired two barrels right among them;* sure you might have heard them skirling at Castlebar."

* A fact!

"Why, Larry, you must have half-killed some of them; the bridge isn't fifty yards from the pool!"

"That's thrue, yer 'onner; and she's a grate weapon, and spreads the shot mighty fine."

"But, Larry," said Miss O'Hara, "has nothing happened since? Has there been no complaint made, or are they satisfied with what they got?"

"They are all satisfied, Miss Honor, entirely satisfied, 'cept big Jim Barrett; he's *onsatisfied* in regard of a shot-corn he got in his eye; would I swear the peace agin Jim Barrett, do you think, yer 'onner?"

This was the second legal query Larry had propounded, which I felt myself quite incompetent to answer; so, ignoring it, I quietly relapsed into my recumbent position and pleasant task of watching Miss O'Hara's pretty face.

The shadows, which meanwhile had been gradually deepening, suddenly merged in the deep shade cast by a mass of clouds, which, propelled by the evening breeze, had spread over the face of the declining sun.

"She'll fish fine now, Miss Honor; and I saw a salmon rise just now, under the rock beyant there, in the ripple."

The long springy rod was speedily spliced, the

reel attached, and run through the rings, a casting line of triple gut, with four feet of strongest single as a finish, having been first duly tested, was attached, and a deep and anxious consultation was held on the important question of which among the gorgeous and glittering flies that crowded Larry's hook should be "put up." This was too bright, that was too dark, one was too large, another too small, the wing of one was too heavy or too long, the body of another too full or too small, this was worn at the head, that was frayed at the tail!

"I'm doubting this loop, Miss Honor. Too red entirely; only good for an old fish. Shure the tinsel's worn off. Faith, that's a grate little hook, but over bright this day."

Such, and many similar, were the objections raised, till I began to think that the palate of a salmon must be as difficult to please as that of a professed gourmand. At last an "inchyquin" was selected, and having been duly tested, and the gut at the same time straightened, by being passed between Larry's horny thumb and finger, was attached by a light loop to the casting line. The rod, to my great delight, not unmixed with dread, was placed in my hands, and under Larry's guidance I essayed to make a cast. In my first two attempts I was singularly unfortunate; the

first brought the fly, with a force which appeared to me preternatural, in contact with my nose ; the blow was like that of a cricket-ball, and nearly knocked me down. Nervous and confused I made a violent stroke, and found the hook deeply imbedded and firmly fixed in the lower portion of my garments behind.

It was rather an awkward position for a young gentleman in the presence of a lady, the immediate object of his adoration, to be placed in ; and the sense of the absurdity of my position was not lessened by observing Miss O'Hara's well-meant but utterly abortive efforts to restrain her laughter ; while Larry, kneeling behind me, bade me "stand aisy," while he cut out the hook from its awkward position, remarking, he wished "it was stuck as fast in the salmon beyant."

Compassionating my confusion, the young lady now came forward, and placing her hands over mine as I held the rod, regulated the movement, and explaining at the same time the grand principle of making the rod do its own work ; the fly, to my great astonishment, and, so far as I could judge, by an act of volition, was shot out some fifteen yards from where I stood and fell light as thistle-down a few feet above the spot where the fish had been seen to rise. As it touched the surface a sort

of wave, self-formed apparently, advanced towards it, and when, in obedience to the young lady's pressure, I raised the top of the rod, thereby moving the fly in the opposite direction, increased in volume and in pace, terminating in one mighty swirl, and a boil in the water as though a barge had swung round. Pausing for a space in which with moderate haste you might have counted three, the lady, with perfect coolness and dexterity, gave a short, sharp, and decisive upward stroke, intended, as I afterwards learnt, to fix the barbed hook in the hard palate of the struggling fish.

There was a pause—an interval of time during which the beguiled creature appeared stunned—taken aback—utterly demoralized at the contemplation of the strange result of his attempted capture of a harmless fly, or fry, or shrimp, or whatever it was he had intended to appropriate; and then, rising to the occasion, he sought by one wild plunge and a leap into the air, to rid himself of the tenacious “tartar” he had so rashly “caught.”

My heart was in my mouth, to use a homely phrase, my nerve was gone, my hands trembled; and but that Larry, snatching at the rod, gently eased the strain, the good fish had been lost. As it was, the force and sleight practised were alike

unavailing, and accepting the situation, the strong beast adopted more resolute, and to me less perplexing tactics. Turning down stream and swimming deep, he dashed down the pool, through the rapid gulley by which it was connected with the stream below, and in doing so again exposed his broad dark back to my eager gaze ; then gaining the deep and comparatively still water below, his course was less rapid, but the distance between us and consequent length of line greatly increased ; the reel spun round with a frantic "whir-r-r" that almost frightened me, and the line ran out at a pace that would have cut my finger to the bone had it touched it.

"Butt him, yer sowl !" cried Larry, in an ecstasy of excitement. "Give him the butt, yer 'onner, or he'll break ye."

Scarcely understanding, I almost mechanically obeyed, and pushing the butt of the rod forward, found I had something more nearly approaching control over the mad beast's movements ; at any rate, he began to "come in fine," as Larry expressed it, and acting on a hint from the young lady, I reeled up with all my heart and strength. The reel, furnished, as that implement should be, with an ample cylinder, took up the line rapidly, and in

half a minute I had the fish where it is desirable, as far as practicable, always to keep him, under the point of my rod.

Breathless, and trembling with excitement, I began to think I had conquered, and that the coveted prize was within my grasp. Little knew I the gameness of my quarry ; a rush that took out thirty yards of line, and a jump out of the water almost as high as the first, were but the prelude to a run, up stream this time, through the gullet, through the pool in which I had hooked him, and into the heavy water above. Although checked by the strain and weight of the line, and the resistance of the rapidly-flowing water, the pace was almost as fast as I could command, and it was with no small pleasure that, after an abortive attempt to ascend a rapid fall which had checked his career, I felt the resolute pull abate, and heard the comforting words,

“ He’s almost done, the baste, bad luck to him ! ”

He was indeed well-nigh spent ; the plucky fish had fought his best and bravest, his strength was exhausted, his breath—fishes breathe through their gills, and a hook in their mouth interferes with the operation—was gone, and, floating on his side, he presented a fair mark for the gaff, which Larry at

once stuck into the under part of the fish, landing him with a whoop! and hurray! at my feet. He was a clean run fish of sixteen pounds—the tide louse on him. I never felt so proud or so happy in my life.

CHAPTER V.

AN IRISH BULL.

OUR homeward road—if road it could be called, that was in parts little else than the dry bed of the winter torrent, encumbered with stones, and now and then intersected by bogs of doubtful tenacity—lay for a considerable distance along the bank of the river.

A wilder or more varied scene of beauty it would be difficult to imagine: the green banks, with scarlet rowan, black alders, and stunted hazels reflected in the dark water, heaps of turf, piled for winter use, chequering the wide expanse of bog, and the distant mountains, now tinged by the setting sun, sloping gracefully to the sea in the dim distance, formed together a scene of rare beauty, such as men spend much time and money to witness in a foreign land, whilst they neglect the beauties spread so lavishly within easy reach of their homes.

The walk was a very pleasant one, Honor's bright face beaming down upon me, as I walked by the side of her shaggy pony. After a time the

road divided, a new and more direct one having been cut by Mr. Blake through some young plantations of larch and fir he had lately made. This was not, however, at present passable by a pony, there being, as Larry expressed it, a "bad step or two," so we agreed to walk, sending that discreet attendant, with the pony, round by the river bank.

We had not proceeded more than half a mile when Honor stopped, and listening, said,

"I do believe that wicked bull is loose again."

A sharp note, which I should never have attributed to its proper origin, at once struck my ear. It was more like the early effort of a newly made "M. F. H." to sound his horn than the deep bellowing roar I had always attributed to the bull.

The next moment, from behind the fir-planted bank a hundred yards or so ahead, issued two or three cows; the monarch of the herd, a tawny brute of the West Highland breed, following in the rear, evidently in an excited state. He walked, as it were, on his toes, lashing his tail, and, as he looked from side to side with a sort of "wha' daur meddle wi' me" air, uttered at short intervals the sharp menacing note that had alarmed my companion.

There was indeed cause for apprehension, in the event of the animal proving mischievous. The road

was narrow, and though open on one side, where the land had been drained and planted, a broad and deep ditch divided us from it; on the other was a wet bog, practically impassable, and more than usually treacherous from the late rains. To turn back would have been to provoke pursuit, so we held on our way, Miss O'Hara perhaps affecting a confidence she did not feel, assuring me there was no danger, if we showed no fear. Showing it or not, I for one could not but feel afraid, and, had I been alone, should have fled incontinently. If I had, this little tale would never have been written; but to do myself justice, the thought of deserting my fair companion never entered into my head.

Meanwhile, the cows seemed more bellicose than the bull, trotting towards us with lowering heads and tails twisted high in air. They stopped when within twenty yards, and then turning suddenly galloped off, forming in good order in the rear of the bull, and by their hoarse lowing apparently encouraging him to go in and attack us. If such was the meaning of their hideous mutterings (to my thinking there is no noise in nature so disagreeable as that made by "the lowing herd"), the bull at once acquiesced. Tossing fragments of the rotten bank alternately to the right and left as he advanced, he rapidly accelerated his pace, until, as

he came within ten yards, he was plunging along at full gallop.

I have heard that a bull, when running at a person, shuts his eyes ; this may be so in general, but the vicious brute in question did not give us even that poor chance ; I could plainly see his red eyes as he advanced, wide open, and fixed on mine. It was a moment of absolute horror, and I fully believed it to be my last ; but for Honor, I think I should have fallen down, and allowed myself to be gored, or tossed, or trampled on, as fate and the bull's idiosyncrasy might determine ; but that young lady, bred in habits of self-confidence and self-protection, never for a moment lost her presence of mind, otherwise we had been inevitably lost, for in truth there was not a moment for aught but action. Taking my hand firmly in her own, she turned me towards the wet bog, and crying,

“Jump, Charlie ; jump for your life ; jump on to the rushes—now !”

She sprang from the pathway, twelve feet at least at a bound, and scarcely touching the patch of rushes indicated, leaped from them on to a rough balk of timber, which, black and scorched,* lay a

* Under the surface of the bog, at depths varying from three to thirty feet, are found the remains of two distinct forests, fallen and submerged at different and probably widely removed dates, but both of great antiquity. The one which furnishes the bog oak, so much used for ornament, is generally in the lowest stratum, and

few inches above the treacherous bog a yard or two further on, and which afforded a firm though slippery footing. Here she perched, like a bird on a bough ; and as she steadied me with her hand, the bull with a mighty splash that covered me all over with black mud, in a vain attempt to follow, sank helplessly in the bog, his tawny body quite covered, and only his head and the ridge of his back visible. I never saw such a change in the appearance of an animal in my life ; the lurid fire in his eye was quenched as completely as that in a red-hot cinder would have been under similar circumstances ; he looked terrified, cowed, almost pitiable ; but there was no time for moralizing. Quick as light, Miss O'Hara placed her foot on the burly broad back of the bull, and springing from it, landed with me at her side safely on *terra firma*.

"Thank heaven, Charlie, we are out of that !" she said ; "that's a bad bull, and if you had not jumped so well—"

"I jumped, dearest Honor ?"

"Well, never mind, Charlie, we both jumped, and it will be long before our friend there will jump out, unless some one help him. And—look at those .

appears, from its frequently charred appearance, and the absence of trunks, to have been destroyed by fire ; the other, which furnishes the pine torches that burn so brightly, is of pine and fir, and has evidently succumbed before the wasting effects of water.

stupid old cows yonder ; just now they were going to eat us, and at present I really think they are begging us to help their savage master out of the fix he has got into."

The cows' demeanour, meanwhile, was as much changed as that of the bull ; they stood on the brink of the flood, lowing and muttering, and no doubt comforting the monarch in his affliction, as, just before, they had incited him to the mischief which brought it on him.

We walked home slowly and pensively ; after all, an escape from sudden death makes the most giddy serious for a time, and I felt both grateful and thankful, and more than ever in love with Honor.

Mr. Blake, on hearing of our adventure, ordered the bull to be assisted out of the bog, and killed incontinently.* I think he deserved his fate, for I heard afterwards that he had long been a terror to the neighbourhood. It was not an unusual occurrence for him to take up a position opposite the great iron gates that opened from the demesne, and bar the road against all comers. There was one

* He was, no doubt, converted into "Navy beef." A noble Lord, recently deceased, was in the habit of buying up all the old bulls of the country, partially fattening, and selling them for the above purpose. I have seen upwards of a hundred turned out together.

particular pool in the river, by no means the worst, the fishing of which, if he did not enjoy, he certainly exclusively appropriated. When he stood on the bank, he would have been a bold fisherman who would have offered to throw a fly from it.

CHAPTER VI.

SEA FISHING.

VERY pleasantly the days passed at Bogleeze ; Pat, either from fear of the threatened blunderbuss, or because he was not summoned, did not appear ; and long as my stay was, I never felt—I am sure my host did not—that I was encroaching on his hospitality.

Honor was my constant companion, Larry our chaperon, a most excellent and discreet one ; he was always in the way at the right moment, never when he was not wanted ; never intrusive nor forward, he was always ready, pleasant, and good humoured. The lower orders of the Irish, at least, have plenty of tact in their composition, and Larry might be a pattern for chaperons, male or female.

We shot and we fished together ; I had by this time learned to handle a rod passably well ; we took long rambles through the mountains ; we sailed or laid lines in the sea, and caught a prodigious quantity of fish by setting spilletts.

The spillet is a line some hundreds of yards in

length, furnished with hooks at equal distances of about six feet ; the hooks are baited with sand eels, mussels, or pieces of fresh fish ; to one end is attached a heavy stone, which is thrown overboard in deep water a little before the turn of the tide. The baits, which have been carefully coiled on the gunwale, run rapidly off, and as soon as the stone reaches the bottom the boat is rowed gently against the tide until the whole is run out. A buoy, commonly the inflated skin of a dog, is attached to the other end, and leaving perhaps two hundred hooks to fish in your absence, you row to shore, eat your lunch, smoke your pipe, amuse yourself how you may for two or three hours, then return and haul in the line. If in luck the take may be considerable in weight and number, though not often of much value ; congers, dogfish, skate, and sea-bream were the usual victims ; but sometimes a big turbot would, after a strong fight, reluctantly flounder to the surface, when he was received on the point of a gaff and safely deposited at the bottom of the boat.

There is some danger in handling the coarser denizens of the deep, if unaccustomed to their peculiarities. Congers bite viciously ; one of twelve or fourteen pounds is worse than a bulldog ; he runs up and down the boat as if mad, snapping

right and left, and you have only to keep out of his way as best you can. I have seen a sailor glad to escape by voluntarily mast-heading himself. Luckily the fish lacks discrimination, and is as likely to take a bite out of the mast or the gunwale of the boat as out of the calf of your leg, but then the alternative is equally likely. Dogfish keep up their implied character ; they delight, if not to bark, at least to bite, and they have a considerable power that way. I once caught a monster of fifty pounds weight, and I am convinced, had the opportunity been given him, he would have chopped my finger off as easily as I would have bitten a radish. Some species of this fish—they are called rough-hounds, I think—are furnished with venomous spikes under the pectoral fin, which, if incautiously handled, make a bad wound and one difficult to cure. Two of us, however, had experience, and although often in danger I never suffered from the attempted revenge of our victims ; a chop on the tail was the usual panacea for their troubles, and incapacitated them from mischief ; the difficulty was to give it.

Our return, especially when we brought home a turbot, was always warmly welcomed by Mr. Blake, and a capital dinner was a prelude to a cheerful evening. Sometimes I read poetry ; Moore and Byron were Honor's favourite authors. Sometimes

she sang ; sometimes, with our pipes and poteen over the bright turf fire, Mr. Blake would discourse on the state of Ireland and propound his views for her amelioration.

One of these was the letting of the bog lands to industrious tenants, not at a low rent, but for some years at least at no rent at all ; he always declared that the raw material was of so little value, and the labour, as compared with it, of so great value, that it was absolutely wicked to expect rent for at least seven years, after which he suggested a shilling a year per acre, increasing by a further shilling each year up to seven or eight. I believe he had tried the plan and found it answer.

In proof of his first proposition as to the valueless nature of the land in its present condition, he told me he had farms of from five hundred to a thousand acres let from seven to ten pounds a year.

The mistakes people who are not accustomed to the peculiarities of the Irish make in this matter are extraordinary.

I had heard previously from one of the tenants that Mr. Blake was "a foine gentleman," and a "grate landlord," but that his, the tenant's, "heart was broken by the rint."

I asked him what rent he paid, and he answered, "A pound an acre," which certainly sounded ex-

orbitant ; on Mr. Blake's explanation I ascertained that the tenant in question reckoned his rent on the ten acres of cultivated land only, and took no account of the nine hundred of bog, over which he grazed such sheep and cattle as he possessed, paying ten pounds for the whole.

Another favourite scheme of his, which has since been partially carried into effect, was the amelioration of the condition of the priests. The unfortunate, as he held it, establishment at Maynooth has, no doubt, sadly lowered the standard of priestly intellect and priestly education ; but he held that keeping aloof from them, ignoring them and their form of religion, and treating them as though they were of a different and lower grade, unfit to associate with gentlemen, was not exactly the way to spread a love for Protestantism.

We were on excellent terms with Father Pat, who had permission to course over the mountain, and not unfrequently dined with us ; a very jolly fellow was Father Pat, and one who, though he never exceeded, liked his glass of grog. He was, in fact, Mr. Blake's head keeper, and a most efficient one. Excepting Larry, Mr. Blake had no one regularly appointed to look after shootings extending over fifteen thousand acres ; but no English manor could have been better preserved.

I rather think that his Reverence preached the doctrine of condemnation to anyone who should perpetrate the heinous sin of poaching over his honour's preserves.

An instance both of the will and the power of the priest to preserve his friend's property occurred during my stay at Bogleeze, which I will relate.

One Sunday morning news came that a coil of rope had been stolen from the boat—a very serious loss where you are forty miles from a shop—and Mr. Blake's ire was greatly roused. We proceeded at once to Mick the boatman's cabin, and found that worthy treating himself to his hebdomadal ablution previously to attending chapel; his wife, who, with three or four children, was still in bed, popped her head under the clothes as, with a "God save all here," Mr. Blake entered the cabin.

"Mick," cried he, "some vagabonds have stolen the rope out of my boat."

"Stolen yer 'onner's rope out of yer 'onner's boat?" was the indignant, almost incredulous, repetition of the statement. "The divil steal their sowls out of their bodies; stop till I tell his Rivirince."

We departed, and Mick, repairing to the chapel, informed the priest of the outrage committed. Father Pat was greatly scandalised; theft, I may

say, is almost unknown in these primitive parts, and although murder may, under certain circumstances, be condoned, is held as a disgraceful proceeding ; it is probable that the rope had been really wanted by some fisherman who had no other means of supplying himself, and thought that his honour would not grudge it to a poor boy. Be that as it may, Father Pat was indignant in the highest degree ; he charged his flock, after expatiating on the sin of stealing in general, and from Mr. Blake in particular, to bring back the rope by the next Sunday, and no one, least of all the Reverend Father, doubted that the order would be obeyed.

The week passed away, however, and Sunday came, but no rope. Then Father Pat stood up, and, shaking with wrath, issued his solemn command that the rope should be returned within a week, OR ! “ Riccolict boys, I’ve WARNED ye ! ”

Strange to say, the implied threat, more potent from its obscurity, was in vain ; the rope, the next Sabbath, was still absent without leave. Then the priest rose in his wrath, and, standing on the altar steps, solemnly declared that on the next Sunday, if the rope were not replaced in the meantime, he would “ curse the Barony : ” he would hear no confession, he would give no absolution, he would

administer no sacrament ; in fine, his flock should be excommunicated ! *On the following Saturday, neatly coiled up, the rope was found in the bows of the boat !*

The tale needs no comment. This is real power, and happily it is not often abused ; but the ignorant peasantry are ready to accredit their priests with something far beyond, and fully believe their assumed ability to work miracles.

Burns tells us,

“ On brandy, man fears nae evil ;
On usquebaugh he'll face the devil.”

And on whisky, Paddy will face almost anything mortal. Mick Sheehan, though a good Catholic and a good boatman, was given to “ the dhrink,” and one morning, shortly afterwards, being what a Scotchman calls “ fou,” that is, very drunk indeed, misbehaved in chapel. Father Pat ordered him peremptorily to quit the sacred precincts, but the potent spirit had made him insensible to mortal fears, and he absolutely refused to budge.

“ Bring me the vestments,” roared the priest ;
“ bring me the vestments, Father Tim ! *till I turn him into a stone.*”

The coadjutor, who perhaps in his heart doubted the Father's petrifying powers, here interfered, and

forcibly ejected the rash recusant. With the morning cool reflection came; the strong man, grovelling at the curate's feet, poured out his blessings and his gratitude.

"God bless your Rivirince! long life to your Rivirince! shure but for you I'd have been turned into a stone!"

Omniscience, as well as omnipotence, is one of the priest's attributes. I have already given an instance in the case of Larry's sandwich, and the grounds of the superstition are not far to seek.

Pat and Thady commit in company some trifling peccadillo—murder an exciseman, beat an intrusive tenant, take a "pot shot" at a landlord, or what not. Pat, in the course of the week, goes to confession; he details all the circumstances, submits to the penance imposed, obtains absolution, and—forgets all about it. Thady, who does not go to his "duty" for perhaps a month, when he does, relates a somewhat garbled, perhaps modified, account of the transaction, and finds himself taken up and corrected at every turn. "Arrah now, it's lies you're telling your priest; it was yourself fired the shot, and you stole the gun from Larry O'Hagan's cabin when you and the boys paid him a visit."

Thady cannot but admit the accuracy of his

Reverence's version, and regards it in the light of a revelation.

It is quite clear that the remedy for this deplorable superstition is in education. Teach Pat and Thady to read, and they will hardly believe that their priest can work miracles, or is in possession of supernatural sources of knowledge.

Unfortunately, the attempts to establish schools in the wilder parts of the country generally fail from well-intentioned, but mistaken zeal on the part of the promoters. As good Protestants, they insist on the Bible being at least read in the schools; this the priests will not permit, and the result is that the schools are empty. Surely, education, even without the Bible, is better than no education at all! if a child *can* read he may, and most probably will one day, read the Bible, but if unable to read, he can't!

CHAPTER VII.

FOX AND OTTER HUNTING.

SPORTING in the wild west is not precisely identical with sporting in more civilized parts of the United Kingdom. There is no lack of zeal in its followers ; keener votaries of the chase, whatever its object, could hardly be found in any country, but the means and appliances, the *modus operandi*, and the unwritten laws of the chase, are altogether different. A fox-hunt, for instance, is got up for the avowed purpose of killing, not hunting, the fox, and Roderick Dhu's dogma is carried out in practice :

“ Though space and law the stag we lend,
Ere hound we slip or bow we bend,
Whoever recked where, how, or when
The prowling fox was trapped or slain ? ”

In coursing, Mrs. Glasse's maxim, “ First catch your hare,” is the mainspring of the performance. Little did we care for turns, or doubles, or cotes ; we found our hare, generally in a bog hole, sitting in a sort of burrow, for the animal partakes in Ireland largely of the nature of the rabbit, and we slipped our solitary greyhound on her back, if we had the

opportunity. A quick, wiry little terrier took second fiddle, and played admirably into his leader's hands, twisting amongst the tussocks, checking the hunted animal in her turns, and always ready to seize her should she stop for a moment after baffling the greyhound's more rapid pursuit. The priest had a wonderful dog ; I have seen him, with the aid of the terrier, kill half-a-dozen hares in a morning.

There were two or three mongrels, and an old heavy-jowled otter-hound, that with the above constituted our "pack of hounds." To find a litter of cubs in the rocks, smoke or drive them out with the terriers, shoot or course them down, was considered quite legitimate ; and when it is remembered that there was no legitimate pack within a hundred miles, and that the foxes, which there grow to a prodigious size,* prey systematically on the lambs, the disrespect for that sacred animal will be readily understood, and my sins in the way of vulpicide I hope condoned.

The badger again, though harmless enough, was a not uncommon object of pursuit ; entirely nocturnal in its habits, the beast was never seen,

* I have one stuffed, whose dimensions may be judged of by the fact that, instead of the ordinary rabbit, he has a large lamb in his mouth, which does not look at all too large. He is generally taken, by those who see him, for a wolf.

and rarely found, in a position out of which he could be bolted by dogs.

“Drawing” a badger is all very well in a prepared pit, where the abominably cruel pursuit is practised on a half-dead, persecuted beast, that has neither strength nor spirit left in it. The badger is perhaps the strongest wild quadruped we have ; its bite is something terrible, and the looseness as well as the impenetrability of its skin renders it almost impossible for a dog even to seize him without being bitten.

The creature has curious habits ; among others, it is commonly believed in the country that he lays up a heap of provender for the winter. I have frequently found these heaps, as big as haycocks, at the entrance of their holes ; they are formed of short grass, mixed with the sand in which the animal generally burrows, and, I have no doubt, constitute his last season’s bed ; for the badger is a cleanly animal, and sleeping, as he does, much in the winter, prefers clean sheets when he retires to winter quarters. The track of the badger is invariably in a straight line ; if you stand on an eminence you may trace them for miles over the mountains in one undeviating straight line, which might have been laid down by an engineer, so perfect is its accuracy.

Otters were abundant, especially haunting the little streams that fell into the sea, and were constant objects of our pursuit.

Anyone who desires a short life, and by no means a merry one, should take to otter hunting as practised by the legitimate packs of hounds, whose doings in Cumberland and Wales are so graphically described week by week, during the summer and autumn, in the columns of *Land and Water*. I think the writers must be easily satisfied, and thankful for very small mercies in the sporting line ; at any rate, my own limited experience has been the very reverse of favourable with regard to the so-called sport. Rising at 4 A.M. or earlier, stumbling along the banks of a river in the dim twilight, the cold dews striking chillingly upwards, the tedious drag, which, after half an hour or so, is generally found to be "heel," that is, in the wrong direction, are not to my taste. Then the splashing through the muddy stream, the unsportsmanlike mobbing of the quarry, and the cruel murder that crowns the sport, when the writhing victim, impaled on a spear,* is held on high, witnessing in his agony a score or more of hounds yelling for his blood, constitutes to my mind unmixed barbarity, and is

* The use of the spear is, I believe, forbidden in many packs ; common humanity requires that it should be in all.

by no means to be included in the category of "sport."

But otter hunting, as it was carried out in the wild west, was a different thing altogether; the beast is a sad poacher, and the quantity of salmon destroyed by him formed a really serious item of loss to the fishery, which was successfully carried on a few miles from the Lodge. As with the fox, our object was to *kill* the otter, not to torture him, and we took the most efficacious means to that end. I will recount one of our hunts.

I was accompanied by Larry and Jemmy, and we had the whole pack out; a very mixed lot they were, half a dozen terriers, a pointer, with the otter-hound and greyhound before mentioned. I carried my gun, and the men were armed with a sort of rude spear, Larry's being a fork with two prongs, barbed, and used, I fancy, on occasions, for leistering the salmon he so grudged to the otters. A lake, communicating with the sea by a stream of about a mile in length, was the favourite resort of these fish poachers, and it was on a small island covered with holly and arbutus that we hoped to find one or a pair. Arrived at the lake, silence was enjoined by the most emphatic gestures on the part of Larry, who, having unlocked a ricketty old boat which lay on the sedgy bank, stealthily punted us

across, the dogs following behind silent as ourselves, uttering not so much as a whimper or a whine. The object was, if possible, to catch the otter asleep, and either to worry or shoot or spear him before he reached the water.

It is proverbially difficult to catch a weasel asleep, and the otter, though not so alert as that tiny marauder, is commonly pretty wide awake, or at least sleeps lightly. On the present occasion, whilst stumbling across the great rocks, half covered with rank vegetation, the beast rushed down almost between my legs, and took refuge in a sort of natural drain, which, formed by two or three flat stones casually resting on some others standing upright, led directly to the water.

Larry was at the opening in a second, and stood, spear in hand, directly above it; the otter-hound swam about questing for the scent, the greyhound leaped frantically up and down over the bushes, both my attendants yelling as only excited Irishmen can yell. The little terriers meanwhile were scratching, scrambling, snarling together at the mouth of the drain, almost fighting for the honour of "first run in" at their dangerous foe. Little Dusty wins the place of honour, and as she penetrates to the otter's stronghold, the others follow in single file. There is no room for two abreast, but

we hear beneath our feet a continuous snapping and snarling, occasionally diversified by a half suppressed sharp yelp of pain on the part of the gallant little bitch.

Larry is wild with excitement ; he actually *dances* as he brandishes the spear, and with a wild hurroo, as the otter, cowed by the vehemence of the attack, dashes forth into the lake, strikes at random, and transfixes—poor Dusty, who had pressed on her flying foe all too rapidly.

I was horrified at the catastrophe, and lost my chance of a shot ; but, to my inexpressible relief, on withdrawing the spear it appeared that the tines of the fork had passed harmlessly on either side of her neck, nailing the game little animal to the earth, but in no way injuring her. The barbs of the spear were rather in the way, and her impatient struggles to join her friends impeded our efforts, but she was soon free and unharmed, excepting from the bites of the otter, which were numerous and severe.

The dogs meanwhile were swimming about the lake or questing up and down the shore, and in a few minutes a challenge from our solitary hound proclaimed the welcome tidings that he had hit on the drag, which led directly up the brook I have referred to. It was in fact a mountain torrent,

occasionally dry or nearly so, but now abounding in short comparatively deep pools, in which the water flowed more or less rapidly, and through which the otter, leaving rings of bubbles on the surface, now swam or dived rapidly. Old "Stringhalt," as, from some peculiarity in his gait, we had named our hound, was anxious to hunt up to his quarry in a legitimate fashion, but the little terriers and the impetuous Larry were in far too excited a state. Running forward, they came up with the otter just as he vented, and the dogs taking up the scent pressed him through the shallow stream at the head of the pool, where I shot him through the head.

The pack was upon him in a second, growling, worrying, floundering one over the other, and bent apparently on tearing their foe to pieces. If such were the object it was unsuccessful; for at the expiration of ten minutes, during which each dog had done his best or his worst, there was not a hole, excepting the shot holes, in his skin. The toughness and strength of these animals is something extraordinary. Excepting the greyhound, whose grip across the loins would have killed a bear, I don't think there was a dog in the pack that could have seriously hurt, far less killed, the bold beast.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEAL SHOOTING.

SEAL shooting is a sport much pursued in this wild district, but it is one I never could take kindly to ; there is something so *human* in the expression of the creature's soft eye and innocent oval face, so confiding in the manner in which, until taught wisdom by bitter experience, he will follow a boat for miles together, especially if there be music on board, now and again shading his eyes with one fin, just as a man shades his with his hand, that he may take a good look at the "monarchs of the deep," that I never, after one experiment, could bring myself to shoot a seal. Otherwise, as I said, the sport would have been very good, and the traffic, if only the seals were of the species which provide jackets for ladies, and waistcoats for gentlemen, a most profitable one. Lest, however, anyone should shoot the poor beasts in the expectation of securing either of those luxuries, or getting a good price for the skin, I may say that the creatures which furnish those much coveted

articles inhabit the southern hemisphere only, and that the skin of *Phoca vitulina*, our common seal, is comparatively worthless.

On every rock, in every bay or sheltered cove that indents this storm-ridden coast, a few years since, seals might at low tide be looked for with almost a certainty of finding them, singly or in small families, slumbering in the warm sunshine. So soundly do they sleep, that, especially when a single one is enjoying a siesta, there is little difficulty in rowing a boat quietly within shot, and a bullet aimed directly at the head just under the ear will generally kill the poor beast outright.

This, however, is by no means invariably the case; the seal is gifted with an extraordinary vitality, and if a spark of life be left, will utilize it by wallowing off the rock into the deep water, where it sinks, whether dead or dying, like a deep-sea lead. This uncertainty of securing the prey renders the pursuit less captivating than it otherwise would be: a porpoise, if killed in deep water, I am assured will float, and although I have no personal experience in the matter, I think it very likely that a creature so furnished with blubber would do so.

On the occasion referred to, I proceeded under the guidance of Larry to the seashore one hot

morning, and having taken up a position behind a huge heap of seaweed collected for manure and not yet removed,* I carefully conned, through a telescope, the unruffled surface of the distant sea; the tide was fast ebbing, and my gaze soon fell on two small black objects that ever and anon appeared and disappeared in the offing. These I knew to be seals, and Larry assured me in a whisper—though at the distance they were from me there was no necessity for caution on that head—that they were coming in from the fishing grounds, and would surely take their afternoon nap on a rock about one hundred yards from where we stood, and some forty yards from low-water mark.

Long and anxiously, hidden by the mass of seaweed, we watched our approaching victims: very slowly, and although so little interfered with, very cautiously they approached—frequently standing up as it were in the water, and peering suspiciously round under their fins for any sign of danger. A low bleat occasionally interchanged seemed reciprocally to assure them, and at last

* The collector, I may remark, does not remove the seaweed, but the seaweed removes the collector. A large quantity is gathered and deposited just below high-water mark. Being tightly bound round with a cord, the latter takes his seat on the heap, and by the aid of a pole and the tide navigates it to his farm.

they were within a score yards or so of the rock, to the base of which the next dive would bring them.

Pressing my arm as a signal to be in readiness, the instant their heads disappeared, Larry rushed forward with myself at his heels, and we gained the margin of foam and sea-wrack left by the last retiring wave, just as the animals rose under the rock fifty yards from us. Our guns were already at our shoulders, and we fired at the same moment; Larry's ball struck the rock a few inches above their heads, but mine, more truly aimed, crashed clean through one poor beast's skull, no doubt killing him instantly. It was then that I learnt the "marvellous alacrity in sinking" possessed by the seal; although so near the shore, the water between it and the rock was at least thirty feet deep, and down to the very bottom sank the body of my vainly murdered victim. I could not but feel something like remorse at having so uselessly slain a very beautiful and interesting creature.

All sorts of strange birds, and many curious varieties of fish frequent this coast; among others the sunfish, or basking shark, the liver of which is said to furnish some hogsheads of oil, and when, as occasionally happens, the fish is killed by harpoons, or stranded by the retiring tide, realizes in money

upwards of twenty pounds. I never saw one of these animals, but I believe they were, at one time, regular articles of commerce.

There were, however, far more useful, if less imposing inhabitants of the sea, which fell to our lot ; these were lobsters and oysters, the first the very best I ever ate. The oysters are gathered at spring tides, out of holes in rocks, or from the sandy bottoms of the pools, attached to any fixed object that happens to be submerged. I have heard discussions as to which shell is uppermost ; the convex was uppermost when the oysters occupied a horizontal position, but in general they hung from the roof, as it were, head downwards. I frequently found them attached to the short trunks of trees, relics of some ancient forest that had been covered by the ever encroaching waves at a time to which the memory of man runneth not.

These wild oysters were generally thin and starved, though good for scallops and sauce, of little value for food ; it was strange, though, how speedily they fattened, and acquired respectable dimensions, under the influence of our disinterested attentions. Torn from the parent beds, and placed in pans supplied merely with salt water, the same as that from which they had been taken, the thin oyster in a week or so became a fat and well-

favoured oyster, and well-flavoured too. I never could understand this ; but I fancy the oyster has the power, under certain conditions, of assimilating and storing the sustenance contained in the water, and so providing for future nutriment, in the event of its regular sources failing. When it finds itself in difficulty the oyster exerts this power, drawing upon and re-assimilating its fund of nutriment.

The natives (not the oysters), who were sadly deficient in fishing gear, would, at times, take whole shoals of grey mullet by simply stretching a corked line across the entrance of a narrow bay or river-mouth, up which they had passed in search of food, when the tide was falling. The fish were at first shy and timid of approaching the suspected snare ; and as the water ebbed away, they were occasionally, by splashing, stoning, and shouting, detained, until, high and dry on the strand, they were captured by baskets full.

Beside these, and many other wild sports which space, and consideration for my reader's patience, prevent my describing, we had capital shooting on the bogs and along the seashore. There were ducks, golden plover, teal, widgeon, in millions, snipe, woodcock, a few quail, curlews, and occasionally wild swans and geese, these latter birds being by far the wariest and most unapproachable of any

known to me. No doubt the spread of draining and general progress of civilization have greatly diminished the quantity of wild birds on the west coast of Ireland, but a sportsman who can stand "roughing it" may still find capital sport on the shores and amongst the mountains of Kerry, Galway, Mayo, and Donegal.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EAGLE'S NEST.

I HAVE often argued and written in favour of the preservation of *all* wild birds, without exception, and I still believe that the preponderance of advantage would be found in preserving "the balance of nature," and that no link, however apparently useless, or even harmful, can be destroyed without injuring the continuity and consequent strength of the chain. If I made an exception, it would be in *favour* of the hoodie crow and the eagle. The former is a truculent thief; he will remove, egg by egg, every one from the nest; he will slay the young birds one by one, returning, time after time, till not one chicken or poult is left of the brood; but I have spoken of this bird and its depredations elsewhere.

The eagle, in common with the lion, and other "Brummagem" heroes, owes all the sentimental favour in which he is held to his noble appearance, which sadly belies his real nature. The lion is, in reality, a skulking cowardly feline brute, that

never except stealthily attacks any animal able to defend itself, springing upon it, as does his cousin the domestic cat on a rat, when unsuspecting and unprepared. The eagle, notwithstanding his grand appearance, his lofty flight and the noble qualities poetically attributed to him, is a lazy gluttonous bird, whose most exalted aspirations tend no higher than the pursuit and capture of a mountain hare, or the seizure of a lamb, generally a sickly one, or one accidentally apart from its dam. In the former case the eagle's services are very valuable, for the hares in the highlands of both Ireland and Scotland abound to an objectionable extent ; but in the latter the bird is most mischievous, and it is little to be wondered at that its destruction is compassed by every means within the shepherd's or farmer's power.

A pair of these birds from time immemorial had had their eyrie on a perpendicular rock, a portion of the lofty mountain known as Bunmore ; and although the young birds were annually destroyed and their parents frequently slain, a fresh pair constantly appeared, probably they still occupy the same position, and might be seen soaring high in the air, within sight of their resting place, wheeling in great circles, apparently in the same lines, through

the trackless air, or seeking their prey in the accustomed valleys.

The present tenants of the rock had been unusually destructive during the spring and summer ; and it having been ascertained that one at least of the young birds was still in the nest, unable to fly, it was determined, if possible, to capture him—I blush to say, with the intent of working upon the parental feelings, and, having deposited him in a favourable position, to allure the old ones by his cries within reach of the concealed gunners.

With this view an expedition was planned ; and furnished with stout sticks and a long coil of rope, Larry and his lieutenant Jemmy, with myself, started one morning on an expedition to the top of the rock. It was a long and toilsome march, two miles through the wet bog, and then two more up the steep side of the mountain. It was past midday when we found ourselves at the desired elevation, and lying flat down, and peering over the edge of the precipice, I could see the nest, a broad, perfectly flat, circular structure of great size, composed of thick sticks, heather, and similar material, lined with moss, hair, and wool. It was white with the birds' droppings, and fringed with the bones and *débris* of grouse, hares, and lambs.

I had fully intended personally to attempt the perilous exploit of descending from the point of the rock to the nest, which was built some fifty feet below; but, though a bold climber, the sheer unbroken depth and frightful appearance of the rugged cliff and ragged rock below, were too much for my nerve, and I willingly surrendered the post of danger to my friend Jemmy. Our arrangements were soon made; the rope was fastened carefully under his arms, and, passed round a rock of a peculiar shape which stood conveniently near, Larry and I took firm hold of it, and Jemmy, slipping over the edge, launched himself into space. Almost instantly, although we had previously neither seen nor heard the parent birds, they appeared hovering at a short distance above our heads, settling occasionally on the projecting rocks, or pirouetting in circular flights around each other, uttering meanwhile, from time to time, mournful wailing cries, apparently more by way of remonstrance at the unprovoked invasion of their nursery, than of menace; indeed, this behaviour was precisely what I had observed, and have, in another place,* described on the occasion of taking a buzzard's nest. Jemmy's stick was of considerable use in keeping him clear of the sharp angles of the rock,

* *Flood, Field, and Forest.*

but it was not needed, as I supposed it would be, for defence; in fact, I do not believe that any English bird, except a raven or carrion crow, will attack the invader of its nest. It is however possible that in this instance a more accurate knowledge of the young bird's powers than we possessed had something to do with the parents' apathy, for no sooner had Jemmy's foot found a resting place on the broad surface of the nest, than, scuttling to its edge, its occupant flopped heavily over and descended with clumsy and broken flight to the plain below. Baffled and disappointed, with many a muttered Gaelic imprecation, Jemmy was with no slight effort hauled up, and we commenced our descent, considerably crest-fallen, to join Mr. Blake, whom I could discern through my pocket glass, some two miles off, accompanied by another person, proceeding to meet us.

At the foot of the mountain, before we had joined Mr. Blake, a man met us with the young eagle, dead, on his back. He had seen it alight, and as it could not rise again, had easily killed it with his stick. On examination it appeared that its wing had been badly injured when young, probably by a stone dropped from above, and, although nearly healed, the wing had not attained sufficient strength to do more than support the bird's weight

in the air ; no doubt another week would have effected a perfect cure, and one more of these beautiful, if not noble, birds left to grace our British Fauna. The patience of the old birds must have been sorely tried by the continued claims of this nearly adult youngster, who ought to have been earning his own living months before.

When we joined Mr. Blake it was evident that something had occurred to ruffle the ordinary placidity of his temper ; he was listening in an excited but dissatisfied mood to the explanation apparently proffered by his attendant, one Mick Costigan, the tithe-proctor and process-server of the district, a gentleman more respected than beloved by his neighbours. Mr. Blake neither asked the particulars of our baffled expedition, nor noticed the beautiful dead bird that lay at his feet.

"The notice not served?" he said.

"Shure, yer 'onner, I would not go alone, and there is not a boy in the Barony would go along with me to the Barretts ; they're bad boys, thim Barretts, yer 'onner."

Mr. Blake looked puzzled, and was evidently at a loss what course to pursue, when a bright thought struck me. I was smarting under a sense of failure and presumed loss of prestige, for I had

vaunted somewhat loudly of my intention to harry the eagle's nest, and I felt a burning desire to revive my reputation for pluck in the eyes of Larry and his *confrères*.

"Is it the Barretts you wish to serve?" I asked, unconsciously imitating the mode of speaking of my companions; "faith, I'll serve them myself; Larry, you'll go with me?"

"I'll do that same," said Larry, "with all the veins;" for the remembrance of the print of the great toe and the slain salmon still rankled in his memory.

"You, my dear boy! they'd knock you on the head, and bury you in the bog," said Mr. Blake.

"Never mind, sir! I'll go, and this afternoon, if you'll let me."

"Well! well!" said he, his countenance relaxing into a smile, "we'll see about it to-morrow morning; it is too late now, and to-night they are catching the sand eels." We then proceeded homewards, recounting as we went the particulars of our abortive raid on the eagle's nest. As, however, it had resulted in the destruction of one bird at least, it could not be considered altogether a failure, and Mr. Blake was highly pleased.

There is, probably, no species of fish more generally useful than the sand eel; not directly

perhaps, but indirectly, inasmuch as it constitutes the favourite food, not only of birds, but of the greater number of the most valuable species of fish. It is always found in shallow water, close to the shore, and in countless numbers ; as the tide recedes the little fish wriggles itself a few inches under the wet sand, where it remains till the waters rise again.

Although too oily to please a refined palate, the sand eel is a great favourite with the lower orders, and on dark nights, such as that which was approaching, and on the occasion of exceptionally low tides, parties are formed for the purpose of capturing it. This is done by raking with crooked pieces of iron in the wet sand. The fish is highly phosphorescent, and although the night be pitch dark, its presence, when brought to the surface, is betrayed by the glittering light that shines about it. Men, women, and children go down in a body to the sands, and great is the fun, and piercing the yells of the captors, as the slippery, shining little fishes are brought by dozens to the surface, and seized, or attempted to be seized, by twenty hands at once.

We had a capital hunt that night, but the process has been so frequently and well described, especially by Maxwell, in his *Wild Sports of the*

West, already alluded to, that I forbear from any special description of it. The only incident worthy of note that occurred that night was the sudden rising of the tide, which sent us all splashing ashore at our best pace. In ten minutes after we had left the narrow neck of sand on which we had been engaged, four feet of water was rolling over it, and the firm surface was turned into a quicksand, which would have engulfed a great ship.

I do not suppose that Mr. Blake would have permitted me to go on what was really a dangerous errand, for the poor evicted tenantry of the west clung pertinaciously to the holdings they had persisted in considering their own, although they had no title save that of occupancy, and had perhaps never paid a penny of rent within their own or anybody's memory. The Barretts were not the men to render up peaceable possession. News, however, of the intended attack on their stronghold had reached them, and a council of war, or peace, having been held, it had been wisely decided to surrender at discretion. In the morning, when Mr. Corrigan arrived with Larry, who carried my gun, they found at the gate four stalwart but ragged men, who, having ranged themselves before the hall door, incontinently fell down on their knees in a row, and with voluble blessings, implored Mr.

Blake's clemency. If only his 'onner would allow them to remain one fortnight, they would all go to America, and never see his face again; which, according to them, was the most grievous result of their projected exodus.

"Look here now, you blaggards," said Mr. Blake, "do you *mean* what you say?"

"We do, yer 'onner; we'll go, one and all, on Sunday fortnight that ever comes."

"Well, you are not such bad boys, after all; and I'll tell you what I'll do for you, I will give you a one pound note apiece to help you across the water."

The men sprang up, and vied with each other in exclamations of devoted attachment, and the pouring forth of benedictions on Mr. Blake's head; they would not stay a fortnight, they'd quit the cabin at once (a wretched lean-to, as I afterwards saw, roughly constructed against the ruined gable of a miserable cabin, which had been unroofed when that summary process of eviction had been carried into effect).

They kept their word, and the following morning, each, with a stick in his hand, and a small bundle over his shoulder, presented himself at the hall door to bid farewell to the master. Mr. Blake presented each with one of those dirty bits of paper which do duty in the west of Ireland as the

circulating medium, and which are far more prized by the peasantry than the bright sovereign they are assumed to represent. Mrs. Maloney appeared with a bottle of whisky, and as they drank a glass each to his 'onner's health and happiness, Larry came forward and cordially shook hands with his recent enemy.

A second glass was about to be administered, when Miss O'Hara appeared, and hurriedly told Larry that the young bull had again got out, and was running down the road. Larry rushed after him, and in another minute the men were fairly on their way to America.

The bull was, in reality, safe in the yard; but the young lady rightly surmised that an extra glass of whisky might have the effect of bringing the newly reconciled foes to a speedy fight, if only to testify their mutual love so happily renewed.

CHAPTER X.

“THE LITTLE PILL.”

MY friend Mr. Blake held a sort of patriarchal position in the immediate neighbourhood of Bog-leeze; he was not only “guide, philosopher, and friend, to his humbler neighbours, but was ready at any moment, should his aid be invoked, to prescribe for their bodily or mental ailments, and to minister to either in the way of “medicine and advice gratis.”

His services, especially in the former particular, were in constant requisition. There is nothing the poorer classes delight in so much as in taking physic, and Mr. Blake’s resources were fully equal to any demand that might be made upon them—in fact, unlimited. Like that of Doctor Sangrado, his method of treatment was simple, though altogether of a different character. Like that learned doctor, however, he had but two prescriptions in his pharmacopæia, and which were made up and “exhibited”—I believe that is the proper medical term—“on the premises.” These were

calomel, and mutton broth, the latter "to follow," as they say in eating-houses. The precise dose of the first was regulated by the most accurate, though not quite scientific measurement; in fact, like the drug itself, it was of a simple nature. As much of it as would lie upon a sixpence was considered a dose for an adult; as much as would lie on a threepenny piece, one for a woman or child. The latter remedy, the broth, I am bound to say, was given without stint or measure, in unlimited quantity; but strange to say, though the patients were frequently in absolute want of food, was partaken of sparingly, and treated by the recipients simply as a remedial agent—unpalatable, but of which the good effects had been proved!

Give Paddy a potato, and he is a happy man; he loves it with an absorbing and *exclusive* affection; he cares, in fact, for nothing else in the way of food; and I do not know but that the sailor's three wishes, recorded by the venerable Joe Miller,* would be pronounced in a like spirit, culminating in "more potatoes!"

* The once venerated joker is no longer read by any class of men, though formerly in constant use by such as wished to shine in society. The sailor's first wish is therein recorded, "that all the rivers and seas were rum;" his second, "that all the ponds and lakes were rum;" his third for—MORE RUM!

But I am digressing. Young as I was, and unversed in pharmacy, I could not but think that, with respect to the calomel, as Hood's washer-woman expressed it, "that quantum was improper," so I obtained from a medical friend in Dublin a large box of potent but innocuous pills, which I distributed liberally to such as applied for them. These pills were in great request, and the cures I effected through their agency raised me enormously in the estimation of my confiding patients, and to some extent in my own. I somehow began to fancy I had mistaken my vocation, and was, without exactly knowing why, a natural doctor, "to the occasion born." I fancy many quacks have been possessed with the same mistaken and equally well founded belief.

One morning, when in the zenith of my medical popularity, I was entreated by Biddy Houligan, the wife of one of the small tenants, who, in consideration of a small deduction from the rent, also acted as a sort of under gamekeeper, for the gift of a "little pill," to cure her husband of a "quinsey he was kilt with."

"But, Biddy," said I, "I don't know that these pills are good for the quinsey."

This was a modest disclaimer, a sort of fishing for a compliment, on my part, for I had begun to

believe in the virtues of my pills almost as firmly as did my patients.

"Never fear, yer 'onner," was Biddy's reply; "they're grate little pills intirely, and Pat bade me make bold to ax for one for meself and the childre."

Happy in the possession of the precious articles Biddy departed, and I went on with my occupation, which, at the moment, was the manufacture of a fishing net, working jointly with Miss Honor; a very pleasant occupation, and affording lots of fun, as we raced one another to complete the meshes, and then fighting for the last stitch, as our fingers met in the middle.

Next morning I was preparing for the day's sport, when I beheld Biddy, her long bare legs glittering in the early sunshine, her unkempt hair "whistling in the wind," racing across the bog. My heart somehow misgave me, and it was with a slight tremor in my voice that I asked after my patient's health.

"Shure, yer 'onner, long life to you, *Pat's dead!*"

"Dead!" repeated I, aghast.

"He *is* dead, yer 'onner, by the now, anyhow; he was dying when I came away."

"Good heavens! why did you leave him?"

"Indeed, yer 'onner, he axed me to ; 'Biddy,' he says, 'step down to his 'onner, God bless him ! and tell him that Pat Houligan is dead, and he'll send some one to look after the game at once. Thim Barretts,' he says, 'they've got a gun hid down in the bog,* and they'll be after the grouse, let alone the hares,' he says. So I says, 'Pat, darlin', go on dyin',' I says, 'and I'll step down and spake to his 'onner.'"

"Well, Biddy, this is bad news ; here's a glass of whisky, and now hurry back to your husband like a good woman."

"God bless yer 'onner's 'onner !" and away went Biddy, hot-foot, on her return journey.

I watched her as she crossed the bog ; the river which bounded it was wider than ordinary at that part, and in consequence not very deep. Like Lord Ronald MacDonald's bride, she "kilted her gown," not "of green satin," but of grey serge, not, as the ballad tells us that young lady did, "up till her knee," but a good bit above it, and, wading safely over, disappeared behind the opposite bank.

I confess to a very uncomfortable feeling as I watched the retreating figure of the newly made

* An ordinary place of concealment for the barrel at least of the gun. The antiseptic qualities of the peat preserve it from rust ; it is not always taken out for an object so comparatively harmless as poaching.

widow; the pride of art, the confidence in my medical skill, deserted me, and I could not but fancy that the "little pill" had been, to some extent, accessory to the death of poor Pat.

It was with a sad heart that I started forth a few hours after, with the faithful Larry, for a walk across the mountain. I could not shoot, though the birds lay well, and I had fired several shots in vain, before I had reached the extreme end of the mountain over which the victim to quinsey, gamboge, and aloes, had kept watch. "Oh," thought I, as an old cock grouse fled, cackling and triumphant, unharmed, away from my gun, "if poor Pat had been to the fore he'd have been down upon us before this."

Could I believe my eyes? what figure is this that comes with rapid strides across the shaking bog, where few would dare to tread, towards us? It is! —no, impossible! yes, by heavens! it *is* Pat himself, pale and haggard,

"Like him of whom the story ran,
That spake the spectre hound in Man."

Pat himself was before us in the flesh, his eyes beaming with gratitude.

"God bless yer 'onner!" he exclaimed, as he seized my hand and carried it to his lips; "long

life to yer 'onner! shure it was all along wid the 'little pill,' that broke the quincy, and put the life into me again, when I was kilt intirely!"

The relief to my mind was inexpressible; I returned to my sport with redoubled energy. My nerve was strong, my eye clear; Pat's life was cause of death to many a grouse that morning; but, from that day to this, I have never administered, nor even taken, one "little pill."

CHAPTER XI.

“LONG TONY.”

OF course no one in this imperfect world can be perfect. Neither Scotch nor Irish gamekeepers are exempt from some traces of mortal fallibility ; but,

“ If to their share some human errors fall,”

they diverge in exactly opposite directions ; which of them is to be considered the least objectionable must depend upon the disposition of the sportsman, whether it be sanguine or despondent.

I think on the whole I prefer the Irishman's exaggerated anticipations of sport and flattering view of things in general, to the Scotchman's over cautious and disheartening utterances.

“ Shall we have a fine day, Duncan, do you think ? ”

“ Weel ! I'll no say but it ma' be fine yet ; but there was a unco' saft look in the sky the morning.”

“ Are there many fish up ? ”

“ Aye, there's mebbe a happening beast or twa in her, but the fish are no that plenty ; she's no preceesly a good colour neither—a wee drumly ! ”

"Had you a good breeding season for the grouse?"

"Weel, it was not altogether bad; but the wat was awfu' sair on the young broods"—and so forth.

It is impossible to get a word of encouragement out of Duncan; with Pat it is altogether different.

"Shure a finer day never shone out of heaven than that we'll have, please God!" "Salmon! faith, there's hardly room for the fish to swim in the river itself."

"Are there grouse in the mountain?"

"Bedad! the mountain's just *lousy* with them."

"Snipe?"

"*Wheugh!*" an interjection indicative of innumerable wisps, and of slightly contemptuous surprise at your asking such a question.

"Have you any *thermometers* or *triangles* in the bog?"

Pat pauses a second, and then replies boldly and decidedly,

"Shure, *there are that same!*"

This habit, though not strictly defensible on moral grounds, has its advantages in keeping the sportsman in a state of continued hopeful anticipation.

I can hardly, though, think that my friend Tony Bodkin (Long Tony) was justified in exercising

his powers of invention when the possible sale of a considerable property was in question. The proposed purchaser was a Saxon stranger, a land-jobber, who had come over to acquire, as cheaply as he might, some of the property which had lately been brought under the provision of what was then known as the "Incumbered Estates Act;" a measure of confiscation, by the way, which, harsh as it proved in some cases, was without doubt the salvation of Ireland.

The owner of one of these incumbered estates was staying at the Lodge, and as Mr. Blake and I walked forth together one morning, we met by purest accident Mr. Bodkin, who, it may be said, was a tenant on the property about to be sold.

"And what brings you out here, Tony, this fine morning, and the oats not cut yet?" asked my friend.

"It's God's truth, it *is* a fine day."

"But what brings you here at all?"

"Well, yer 'onner, I came out on the car with the English gentleman beyant there, just to show him the mearings of the Cotton-rush town-land;" then added in a stage whisper, "he's a moighty foine gentleman is his 'onner, and a moighty clever one; sure he'll make up the loss of the day's work and the oats to boot to a poor boy!"

Tony's semi-introduction resulted in our joining

the intending purchaser in his tour of inspection. He was an intelligent man, but manifestly of a sanguine, perhaps credulous, turn of mind. He had been reading up Maxwell's *Wild Sports of the West*, at once the most amusing and most unreliable of Irish narratives.

"I suppose there are no wild deer in the country now," he observed to Tony.

"Deed then, there are wild deer, yer 'onner—*plenty* of them."

"Bless me! have you seen any lately?"

"Faith! an' I see six—or five it was—on the last blessed Sunday as ever was. I was going to mass yer 'onner—Father Thady, a moighty foine preacher he is——"

"But where did you see the deer?"

"Just in the bog down below, foreanent the butt of Ben Mair; there was the owld stag with the biggest horns I ever see; and the—see here now," cried he, suddenly stopping in his narrative, and pointing to a very antiquated lump of what had once been horse-dung, "what do you call *that*, now?"

The stranger confessed his ignorance.

"Then," said Tony, his eyes twinkling, and his whole visage brightening up at the scarcely expected acknowledgment of greenness, and the suc-

cess of his bold stroke, "that's the deer's marks, anyhow!"

Our friend seemed much struck, and remarked that the country was admirably adapted for a deer forest, and that, if preserved, they would no doubt speedily be as plentiful as in Maxwell's time.

"I'll go bail for that same," interposed Tony; "they'll be as plenty as thim chaps with the big horns I see in the Phaynix Park at Dublin."

I think Tony had a tale to tell bearing on his visit to Dublin; but he was too intent on his present object, whatever that might be, to yield to the temptation at the present moment.

"May I make bould to ask yer 'onner what you are doing with the little bottle at all?"

"It's a phial of acid," was the reply; "I am testing the rocks to see if there is any limestone about." Then turning to us he remarked,

"These Irish, high and low, are so lazy and stupid; they sit with their hands before them, and never attempt to develop the resources of their country."

"Faith, and that's true!" remarked Tony, humbly; "it's you English gintlemen have the larning, and, God be praised! know how to use it. But," he added, after a moment's consideration, "would that be limestone, yer 'onner, that comes to Westport

in the boats—a dark sort of a stone, and they burn it to powder?"

"Just that!"

"Faith, thin, if yer 'onner will step along with me to the big mound beyant there, I'll show you lashings of that same."

This request, simple as it seemed, was not so easily to be complied with, inasmuch as it involved the wading through a considerable extent of splash, and a quaking bog, concealed by a profuse growth of fleecy cotton-rush beyond, and was consequently declined, Tony being directed to bring a lump of the stone he mentioned for examination and testing. He splashed across accordingly, and after a vast amount of clinking and hammering, returned with a lump of rock weighing at least half-a-dozen pounds; it was marvellous how he had contrived without tools to break it off. Be that as it might, the specimen was without doubt pure limestone of a very fine quality, and as the acid poured upon it fizzed and hissed, the stranger's face lightened and brightened exultingly.

"I always thought so," he said; "I was certain that limestone must exist in this formation; what fools these Irish landlords are! Why, these bogs only require draining and the application of lime

to make them worth three pounds an acre, instead of three pence, which is about their rent now."

I don't know whether, on the strength of the present discovery, and the vision of a deer forest in the future, Tony's friend became the purchaser of the bog we were on; but I do know, on the best authority, that of Tony himself, who, on a later occasion, confided the secret to me, that he had walked, the night previously, nine Irish miles and back again, in order to deposit the precious specimen in the place where he pretended to discover it.

After we had parted company and were returning home, we discussed the much-vexed question of salmon preservation. Mr. Blake was very severe both on the laws themselves and their administrators, who, he averred, favoured the netters unduly, to the detriment of the rod-fishers, whose occupation was in many rivers gone, there being no fish for them to catch, excepting in the netters' close time, and few enough then. In fact, according to my friend, the Irish fisheries were getting worse and worse every year.

"It was very strange, too," he observed, "that in many cases the excessive care and trouble bestowed on their preservation seemed to have had the

opposite effect to that intended." At Ballynahinch, for instance, he declared that thirty or forty years since, when the mouth of the river was closed by a solid wall, over which no salmon could pass, excepting in a heavy flood, when there was neither gap, nor slap, nor license, nor close time, when every man, and woman too, not only fished, but netted and speared and burnt the water, as seemed good in their eyes, both lake and river swarmed with fish; there were twenty salmon and a hundred white trout for every one in the present day.

"Do you think, then," asked I, "that we should recur to those lawless times and abolish protection altogether?"

"I won't go so far as that," he replied; "but there are some things that don't bear cultivation; you may spud thistles for ever, and not get rid of them, but I question whether you would get a crop if you sowed the seed and manured it. Not only are the laws sadly defective and unequally administered, but great practical blunders are made, which occasionally counterbalance the benefit of preservation; for instance, because the fish crowded too thickly on certain spawning beds, a late keeper determined to make the beds of the streams *all* spawning ground—the Irish principle, of making an apple pie all quinces—and employed his army of

watchers in clearing out the big stones and rocks that encumbered their channels. The consequence was that the fish found no resting places, no protection from the strength of the stream, no dark holes in which, under shade of the rock, to rest, no harbour of refuge when pursued by otter or poacher; the falling off of the first year's hatch was enormous. Another plan tried to increase the number of the fish was that of destroying the white trout, which swarmed in the water; this attempt was entirely successful, so far as the extirpation of the trout went, but not an additional salmon was ever found to occupy their vacant lodgings.

Again, he considered the absolute preservation of the kelts as more than questionable policy; no doubt, he said, the weight of the old fish is thereby increased, but the number and aggregate weight of the whole are diminished. No one, he argued, keeps an old bull, or an old horse, or an old animal of any kind for breeding purposes. Your keeper kills down, when and where he can, the old pheasants and partridges, and the best plea for "driving" the latter birds and the grouse is, that you slay the old ones. An old kipper is as strong as he is savage; he has teeth like a cat's, and he exercises despotic sway over the spawning beds, driving away, mutilating, or killing, his younger, more vigorous, but less

powerful rivals. Add to this that the fish themselves, when well mended as in most waters they become, are good, wholesome, and palatable food, most acceptable to the poorer orders at any rate, and it is absolutely sinful to insist upon their being all returned to the water, more especially as a very large proportion of them subsequently perish from exhaustion. After the middle of March, he said, let every man do as he thinks fit with the kelts he takes, kill them, or return them to the water, give them away, or eat them, as seems good in his eyes.*

I confess I think there is much to be said in favour of my friend's views.

* Lest it should be supposed that I am cribbing this idea from the writers in the *Field*, who have recently so ably and forcibly advocated it, I beg to say that I used the same argument six or seven years since in the *Autobiography of Salmo Salar*, which forms the first portion of *Flood, Field, and Forest*, and that I have frequently written to the same effect in *Land and Water*.

CHAPTER XII.

FAREWELL.

“HONOR, darlin’, here’s a letter for ye,” was Mr. Blake’s greeting one morning, when my stay at Bogleeze had been prolonged over three weeks; “and here’s one for you too, Charlie; who would be at the trouble of writin’ to either of ye beats me intirely!”

I should say that the post at Bogleeze was a somewhat uncertain and desultory institution; the nearest post-office was more than twenty miles off, and the delivery of the letters that accumulated there was altogether a matter of chance. Sometimes a boy, sometimes a girl, in the hopes of a shilling and a meal, would take their shoes off, sling them on one side of their neck to balance the post-bag on the other, and jog over the mountain, appearing at breakfast, to return in the course of the same day. Some excitement was of course caused by the arrival of the letter-carrier, and our host always went through the process of opening the bag, and sorting and delivering the letters personally.

Honor blushed, I fancied, as she opened, and, after looking into hers, left the room, informing her uncle that "Cousin Phelim"—Phalim, she pronounced it—might be expected to dinner that day. My own epistle contained a peremptory order to return at once to Alma Mater, and prosecute those studies I had lately relinquished in favour of more congenial ones. This was indeed a heavy blow, and I felt like a whipt schoolboy, as, with Larry for my companion, I started forth on what must be for many a long day my last shooting expedition.

Our sport was, as usual, good, and the bag, besides snipes, wild fowl, and grouse, contained six or seven woodcocks, which were just arriving, and, tired with their flight, lay well amid the thick heather, and under the rare hollies. One singular circumstance happened to-day; I had shot a grouse, which lay fluttering on the ground within twenty yards of me. Don was looking idly on, Rap, as usual, had started off in search of the survivors of the family, I was reloading, when, with a mighty rush and whistling of wing, an eagle swooped down, passing within a yard of my head, and carried off the grouse from under my nose, as it were.

The boldness of birds of the hawk kind when in pursuit of their prey, especially of wounded birds, is very great. I hardly ever wounded a snipe but

it was at once chased by a pair of merlins, or other small hawks, that appeared to have been "waiting" on me for the chance; but such cool impudence as that of the eagle in question I never witnessed. To destroy and devour wounded or unhealthy birds is the mission of these "free lances" of the air, and I long since came to the conclusion, whether I was the first to do so I know not,* that the origin of the grouse disease is that undue interference with the laws of nature, which is involved in the extirpation of what gamekeepers are pleased to call "vermin," the hawks and kites, buzzards and harriers, which formerly abounded on the bogs and moors, and pounced down upon every sickly or maimed bird, now left to perpetuate a diseased and weakly progeny.

The same disposition to attack the weak, wounded, and helpless is shown in fishes. A pike will lie "hushed in grim repose," half hidden by the weeds, for days together, whilst tender dace and glittering bleak play about his very nose, and no attempt is made to capture them; but the moment your bait, an impaled specimen of one of

* Mr. Jenes, author of the well-known and most amusing sporting brochure, *The Tomie-beg Shootings*, assures me that he arrived at the same conclusion many years since, indeed, on the first appearance of the disease.

these innocents, is brought under his notice, he dashes at it in the mistaken idea that it is a fish in difficulties, which he is about to appropriate. Hence, as I have said elsewhere,* it is a mistake to make a spinning bait revolve too truly; a slight "wobble," indicative of weakness, is more captivating.

We talked—I mean Larry and I—of the priest, and his mode of dealing with his flock. Larry, as I have said, held his Reverence in the highest respect and dread; but there was something comic too in the poor fellow's account of his dealings with his flock.

"It's little, yer 'onner, some of the poor creatures have to live on, and no wonder there is more than one 'dead man's pool'† on the river. There's Widow Macree now, she keeps Corney Bodkin's Lodge, and there's a slip of a child left with her by a son that's gone to 'Merikee; she has just two shillings a week to live on, divil a penny more, it's God's truth."

"Does no one help her?"

"And who is there to help her, barrin' the

* Vide *Thames and Tweed*, article "Pike."

† So called from the fact of a poor starved peasant having crawled to the bank to die; a flat stone would mark the spot where he was found.

masther here, and he's plenty as bad off nearer home."

"But the priest, does he not visit her?"

"Oh shure, his Rivirince visits her once a month."

"To help her, I suppose?"

"Not at all; *he just calls for his dues, once a fortnight,** thim's a shilling."

"Marriage fees? Faith, thin, they come mighty hard on a poor boy. When I was married on Biddy yonder—you know I had a wife before Biddy, and I thought his Rivirince would take less the second time—so I offered three half-crowns in place of the fifteen shillings; and if I did, I had better have left it alone, for when he was just comin' to the blessin' itself, he shuts up his book, and turns away from the altar quite unconcerned like. 'Shure,' says I, 'your Rivirince hasn't done with us intirely, and you not put the blessin' on?' 'Get up thin out of that, Larry,' he says; 'get up out of that, ye half-married vagabone you, ye world's divarsion,' he says; 'get up, and larn what it is to chate your priest,' he says. Shure, I was bound to pay the three half-crowns and another along with them, and it's a joke his Rivirince has agen me to this day."

With these and such like anecdotes Larry be-

* A fact!

guiled our walk, and it was nearly dinner-time when we returned to the Lodge. Pat was there with the car and the little bay mare, and Honor stood on the steps joyfully greeting a tall man with sandy whiskers, who was introduced to me as "Cousin Phelim." A pang of jealousy crossed my mind as I passed in, and perhaps something in my manner towards Honor gave umbrage to the sensitive Irishman, for I heard something like an altercation between the pair as I stopped at the thin deal door.

"Shure, Phalim," I heard the lady say, "he's only a boy, and his mother's ——"

I did not catch the rest of the sentence, nor his reply ; but Honor concluded sharply,

"I tell ye, Phalim, I'll do as I like ; and if you make a fuss, I'll *kiss* him when he goes away to-morrow." *Will* kiss him ! well, never mind !

* * * * *

"Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest," was my kind friend's motto, and at an early hour next morning I found him at the door ; he was engaged in lecturing my friend Tim, the carman.

"You'll take care of the fine young English gentleman, now, Tim ! do you hear me ? and not upset him. Are ye drunk now at all ?"

"Shure, Mr. Blake, and it's jokin' ye are ; I'm

fastin' from all but sin this blessed mornin'—and for the young gintleman."

"Get along with ye, ye blaggard now ; and here's a hunch of bread and meat, and Mrs. Maloney shall bring ye a dhrop of the craythur ; be careful now, or I'll murder ye !"

"God bless you, my dear boy ; come again and see the old man." And so wringing my hand he dismissed me.

Was Honor there ? she was ! and as she too warmly squeezed my hand, I thought I saw a tear in the corner of her eye, lighted up as it was by a half smile.

"Good-bye, *dear* Charlie," she said, "good-bye ! and—" she stooped her head so closely to mine as I sat in the car that they nearly touched—"remember what I said at the planting road—

"*'A man may not marry his grandmother !!!'*"

* * * * *

Light and buoyant is the spirit of youth, fresh and elastic the morning air, the road was soft and springy, the little mare fresh as a kitten, the car-driver elate and happy.

"Ar-r-r-r ! now, get out of that, ye schamer ! get along wid ye"—striking with his whip as though he would cut the willing little beast in half, but carefully abstaining from touching her ;

"whoop, ye Tory! get along out of that, I bid ye!" then, turning to me, as the little mare, with a cock of her eye over the ragged blinkers and a whisk of her hairless tail, evidently appreciated the joke, he said, "A grate little mare that, yer 'onner. I've driv' her forty English miles every day this blessed week, barrin' Sunday!" and then, suddenly changing the subject; "A foine gentleman, Mr. Blake, God bless him! yer 'onner was in good quarters at Bogleeze, I go bail; and the young lady, shure she's like a waxy potato—good all through."

I cordially acquiesced in the praises of my late host, and more guardedly in those of Miss Honor; but I can't help thinking the rascal had a notion of my feelings (though I confess their warmth had considerably abated within the last twelve hours), and proceeded:

"Mr. Phalim, too, is a likely boy; but it's a pity Miss Honor had not a better bargain—a young English gentleman, now."

"And who is Mr. Phelim?" asked I.

"He's just an agent, yer 'onner."

"Is he a good one, a popular one, I mean?"

"Faith, thin, I'll say no harm of him; there's many worse—the Corrigan's now."

"Are they bad?"

"*Sift hell*, yer 'onner, you'll not find two worse.

Faith, Mr. Phalim had a mighty narrow escape in regard of being taken for Mick Corrigan. A strange boy came up to him down beyant there, with a note in his hand—"Here's a letter for yer 'onner, Mr. Corrigan!" he says. "It's not for me at all," says Mr. Phalim. "Thin," says the man, "you ain't Mr. Mick Corrigan." "I am not," says he. "And faith," says the man, laughing, "*it's lucky for yer 'onner!*" I did not quite see the joke, which Tim explained.

"You see, he had a pistol in his other hand, and he'd have shot him dead if he'd owned to the name. It was mighty cute and thoughtful of the boy."

A short silence ensued; but my friend, who abhorred silence as nature abhors a vacuum, speedily resumed the conversation.

"Do you see yonder goat?" he asked, pointing to a venerable patriarch, which, perched on the apex of a small hill, the summit of the mountain pass we had long been ascending, showed boldly in profile against the sky-line. "He's like our Irish gentlemen: mighty small means, but grate prospects!"

Turning from the figurative present to the well-remembered past, I asked, *apropos* to nothing, what sort of woman was Mistress Maloney?

"She's a foine lady is Mithress Maloney, and

straight and stiff—for all the world like the kitchen poker”—after a pause—“*barrin’ it’s occasional warmth*; but Miss Honor, yer ’onner, she’s like a barrel of buttermilk.

“Hurroo! hoop! hoop!!”

And away, at the rate of good twelve miles an hour my eccentric friend commenced the descent of the mountain, the top of which we had gained by two hours’ toilsome travelling. *Facilis descensus*, this side was far steeper than that we had ascended, and as we clattered along I was fain to hold on to the car rail to prevent my flying off at a tangent, in which case I should have been as inevitably killed as if I had been thrown from an Alpine precipice.

Whir-r-r! Whir-r-r! Grind! Grind!

“What’s that? Hold hard!” I cried; “the wheel’s coming off. *Hold hard! stop!!*” I roared once more, as Tim, looking calmly over his shoulder, quietly asked,

“*Is the wheel coming off?*”

Almost by force I compelled a halt, just as the grinding wheel had ceased to whirl, and the foot-board rested on the ground. Tim descended from his perch, and, whip in hand, after administering a soothing “pur-r-r” to the mare (an English driver would have given his horse a job on the

curb, a curse, and perhaps a kick in the ribs) proceeded to inspect the seat of the disaster; looking narrowly at the axle-tree, he exclaimed, with an approving chuckle:

"Thim boys! the jokers! they've been and took the linch-pin out!"

I remembered now that when we had stopped half way up the mountain, two or three friends of Tim had held a good deal of chaffing conversation with him, mostly in Irish, and had bid him farewell in a rather tumultuous and joking manner.

"Sit aisy, yer 'onner, till I fix it;" and disappearing in the direction of a snug cabin, that stood a little way off the road, Tim left me with the mare and the broken car. In a short time he returned, and taking up a flint, hammered something into the vacant hole in the axle.

"What have you got?" asked I.

"A linch-pin, shure!"

"A linch-pin! where did you get it?"

"Faith, thin, I *tuk it out of the car up beyant there!*"

And away we went at the same break-neck pace as before.

"God bless yer 'onner! long life to yer 'onner!" was Tim's parting, as, applied to another person,

it had been his introductory blessing. Very kindly he meant it, and very kindly I took it.

I love the Irish, and I love their country; neither is perfection; but, heaven mend us! neither are we; their faults are mostly those of the head, not of the heart; and when faults crop up into crimes, it is more from ignorance and bad teaching than natural depravity. Few Irishmen have the gift of ruling well; but, if ruled well, there are no better labourers, no braver soldiers, no more fervent preachers, no more eloquent lawyers, no warmer friends.

It is not without regret that I bring to a close these trifling sketches of sports and incidents, some of which *did*, and all of which *might* have happened—might happen now—in the wilder districts of that hospitable country. I have drawn both upon my memory and my invention, and doubtless the astute reader will readily distinguish between the two—bearing in mind, however, that the *vrai* is not always the *vraisemblable*.

* * * * *

And what, my reader will ask, was the result of my flirtation with Miss O'Hara? Did I pine away, lose my exam., or my appetite, or waste a portion of my life in unavailing regret?

Certainly not! men, young men especially, get over these little maladies with singular ease.

“Love flows like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide.”

And when, after a lapse of years, I met my fair friend, it was with sincerest pleasure, but with unquickenened pulse, I beheld a buxom dame, “fat, fair, and forty,” who presented to me, with conscious pride, six or seven chubby-faced youngsters, bearing a striking resemblance to my old acquaintance “Phalim.”

We parted, months and years rolled by,
We met again some summers after ;
Our parting was all sob and sigh,
Our meeting was all mirth and laughter.
For in my heart's most secret cell
There had been many other lodgers ;
She was not now the ball-room belle,
But only Mrs. *Phalim* Rogers.

MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS.

MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS.

A WALK THROUGH THE "PHŒNIX PARK," DUBLIN.

DUBLIN was described long since as the "*sabbathinest, tay-drinkinest, car-drivinest*, place in Christendom, flogged the world for divarsion." The description may be trustworthy, but to a stranger, a Sunday spent within its precincts is apt to prove rather *triste*, and when, on my return from the west, thanks to the slowness and unpunctuality of the railway, I found myself constrained to spend that day within them, I felt considerable anxiety on the subject either of amusement or employment: the Protestant portion of Ireland is indeed quite on a par with England in respect of the sad, if not bitter, observance of the day of rest.

Breakfast and church were over by twelve o'clock, for they keep early hours in Dublin, and

it was with a feeling of gratitude, akin to that which Lord Tom Noddy felt towards Tiger Tim when—

“ He said, as the door behind him swung,
An’t please you, my lord, there’s a man to be hung ! ”

that I accepted the hint of my friend Pat, the “ Boots ” of the Hibernian Hotel :

“ Shure, yer ’onner should see the Phaynix Park ! ”

I had often heard of the beauty and extent of the park, and determined at once to visit it ; accordingly, I took my seat on one of those tramway-cars which are found both a convenience and a luxury in Dublin, and are patronized by every class, although in our more crowded thoroughfares they seem to be looked upon with an unfavourable eye.

My course lay along the banks of the Liffey—a turbid stream, swelled by the recent rains, and hardly contained within its stone-supported banks. Flecks of white foam, like snowballs, dot the surface, a few boats struggle against the surging water, nets hang in festoons from the walls, and foaming torrents roll in from flooded sewers, hundreds of gulls flit, like swallows, above and about, ever dipping down, making a feint, but never, or but

rarely, settling on its surface, ever, like Dickens's Nadgett, apparently expecting to meet with something, or somebody, which or who never comes. Gulls somehow seem out of place in the midst of a busy and great city, but everything in Ireland is out of place, or appears so to our unaccustomed eye.

Leaving the car, I enter the park, and before I have got well past the ugly monument, which, a friendly potboy tells me, was erected to commemorate Wellington and his victories, I am strikingly impressed with its magnitude and superiority in every respect to our own comparatively small and stupidly subdivided enclosures, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. The extent of the Phœnix I do not know, but it must be very considerable, and is, with good taste, left as far as possible in a state of nature ; iron railings are rare, iron hurdles unknown.

Turning to the left, I find myself in a thicket of ancient thorn-trees, standing singly, many covered with a luxuriant growth of ivy, and opening here and there to beautiful views of the Wicklow mountains and the rapid river looking bright in the distance. Some thrushes and blackbirds are hard at work with the berries, a colony of long-tailed tits flits before me, and a redbreast dribbles out its cheery wintry note from the branch above ;

a magpie's nest on a lofty tree, and another in an ancient thorn, speak ever more openly of the country, and I could fancy myself in some wild part of the New Forest ; only a magpie's nest would there be a real novelty. A bright rapid stream, probably swelled like the Liffey into abnormal dimensions, tumbles along beside my path, and the scenery gets wilder and more beautiful every moment. Presently I come in view of the Vice-regal Lodge, a spacious white edifice, ugly, but comfortable-looking enough.

Close at hand lay two fine bucks, and I marvel at their apparent good-fellowship, knowing the habits of the animal in October. While mentally attributing their strange quietude to the fact that they are Irish, and of course different from any other bucks, they both rise together, and I then see that the two have been combatants, fighting until, like the warriors of old, they have lain down to rest, mutually exhausted. The victor, a black buck, with superb horns, is, as frequently happens, in sad case ; besides the punishment received from his adversary, he has been gored in the side, probably by some jealous youngster, "a felon knight" who has caught him at a disadvantage when engaged with his adversary ; he is, besides,

so lame behind he can hardly hobble. If the white beast who, in far better condition, flees before him did but know his crippled condition, he would find courage to reply to his fierce defiant bellow, and speedily turn the tables. But the white buck does not know this, and, terrified by the other's fierce threats, and mindful of his recent defeat, trots limpingly away towards the distant herd, the black avenger still, *pede claudo*, pursuing. A fresh episode in deer life here presents itself. Another fine buck, fresh and stalwart, heading a small detachment of does, fawns, and young males, appears on the scene. Why does he stamp and bound from one side to the other, bellowing, threatening with his horns, now rushing at one, now at another of his followers? Even the does are menaced: the cause is soon apparent. They are minded to go towards the herd, and thither, in spite of his efforts, they wend. As they approach an answering bellow is heard, and a grand old buck dashing forward, puts to flight, after a few passes, the would-be leader of the clan. To quote Bombastes—

“So have I heard *another* lion roar,
And the first lion thought the last a bore.”

Approaching under cover of the trees, I now enjoy

a very interesting sight in watching the manœuvres of the herd. Although jealousy is rampant, there does not appear such malignity of hatred among the bucks in general as that which inflamed the individuals I had just seen. Perhaps they were political as well as personal enemies. As a rule there was more talk than fight, each buck "belling" out his pugnacious or amorous feeling at the top, or rather the bottom, of his voice, and occasionally engaging in what really appeared a mock combat, just to pass the time and amuse the ladies.

The conduct of the does, too—of some among them at least—was both curious and amusing. Couching down on the grass, her graceful neck stretched flat upon it, a mottled young doe would repose in the most natural and unaffected manner. A broad-antlered old buck, threatening all others with his horns, trots "corkily" up, and putting his nose down to hers, whispers, or grunts, some soft nonsense in her ear, to which she, lifting up her innocent eyes, replies in soft and peculiar accents, something between the anxious whine of a spaniel and the cooing of a dove. The old beau is more than satisfied by his reception, and bellows forth his triumph. Next moment she is on her legs, careering away with the fleetness of the wind, "*fugit in salices*," the gallant old gentleman, who

is somewhat scant of breath, following in her wake, at the best pace he can muster.

Such bare-faced flirting would never be allowed in a London drawing-room at any period of the season, or in any society.

So far as my observations went, the theory of "selection of the fittest" was utterly ignored. The moment the "antlered monarch" for the time being was absent, engaged perhaps in mortal combat with an equally worthy rival, some hitherto retiring swain would bound forward and proffer his attentions, which would be received with the same graceful compliant gesture, the same murmur of acquiescence, as she had bestowed on her previous admirers. The truth is that selection is all moonshine. That good-looking, retiring, modest young fellow is worth a dozen of the hoary, strong-antlered monarchs of the herd who keep him and his fellows at bay. "None but the brave deserve the fair"; brute strength and offensive weapons among brutes carry the day, as rank and wealth do among mortals. The theory is a piece of scientific humbug, utterly unsupported by proof, and absolutely contradicted by fact, as every observer of nature well knows.

Passing on, I come to a broad, level course, half a mile wide; four weedy racehorses have just

taken their gallop, or perhaps had a trial spin. They are smoking after their exertion, and their attendants are diligently mopping their reeking sides, their saddles, bridles, and paraphernalia lying in separate heaps. It seems strange, somehow, on a Sunday morning ; but I have heard that such things sometimes occur in parts of England, and, at any rate, like little Alice in Wonderland, one soon ceases to be surprised at anything in Ireland. Hard by, some fifteen or twenty lads are busily engaged in athletic sports, running, jumping, leap-frog, what not ? A desecration of the Sabbath, no doubt, but, gentle reader, every one of these lads heard mass before you were out of bed in the morning. Yonder saturnine man, dressed in tight-fitting, not over-new, clothes, with close-shaved crown, seedy low-crowned hat, and small outward vestige of linen, regarding their gambols with no unkindly eye, would, at the first sign of riot or excess, be down upon them with upbraiding voice and gesture ; if necessary, with heavy blows, which, albeit he is personally unknown to them, would be borne not only uncomplainingly, but reverentially. Great is the power of the priests in Ireland.

I am now at the rear of the Viceregal Lodge, and I see that this side of the park is bounded by

a massive wall, with holes cut into it here and there for ingress and egress. Ugly as is the front of the Lodge, the rear is still uglier, but the grounds appear to be tastefully laid out, and on the other side of the deep *ha-ha* which bounds it is a pleasant wood, stretching down to a lake, with a broad gravel-walk here and there open to view. A tall handsome man, with a long red beard, is pointed out by one of a gazing crowd as the Viceroy himself. He might have been the Vice-regal gardener for anything I knew to the contrary, but I think my informer was right as to the identity. We worship rank in England, but in Ireland it is idolized, and the veriest cad knows every man of title by sight.

A sullen roar proclaims my vicinity to the Zoological Gardens, and feeling a wish to inspect them, I approach the gate in the subdued hope that some good Samaritan may give me a ticket of admission. To my surprise and delight, I find that in Dublin, so far from Sunday being an exclusive day set apart for the visits of the Upper Ten, or the very bad imitation of the Upper Ten which on Sundays infest our own Zoological Gardens, the populace are invited to them on payment of the small entrance fee of one penny. I cannot conceive a greater improvement on the

system than would be effected by the adoption of this admirable arrangement in our own favoured institution.

The gardens themselves excel our own in point of beauty, as much as do the parks their rivals here. Prettily wooded, tastefully laid out, stretching down to a beautiful lake, they possess every natural advantage; and were it not that an air of poverty pervades the place, they would beat us at every point. I do not hesitate to say that, as a rule, the beasts in their wretched ramshackle dens, which do not seem even tolerably safe, are far better in health, and consequently in appearance, than our own. It is notorious that where one young lion or tiger is produced in England, ten are born and bred in Ireland. Perhaps the desultory and intermittent mode of feeding consequent upon a limited exchequer has something to do with this. Lions and tigers in a state of nature gorge themselves one day in the week, and of necessity fast the greater part of the remainder. The daily rations of shinbone and neck of mutton are all very well for soldiers and sailors, but are apt to produce apoplectic symptoms in a caged wild beast.

There were several points of difference in the conduct of the gardens, I observed, some of

which merely struck me as novelties, and some I think might be worthy of Mr. Bartlett's consideration. The bears, for instance, present a striking contrast in appearance to the mangy brutes that occupy the damp well in our own gardens. Instead of wet pavement and damp walls, they are provided with ample tanks of water, in which they constantly disport themselves; their fur is in consequence as black and clean and glossy as that which constitutes a lady's muff. Even the sun-bears, the black, lazy, naked-snouted beasts which may be seen in our gardens lolling on their backs, sucking oranges, in the summer, have a great cold bath at their disposal, and with the trunk of a tree stretched across it, indulge themselves, as I was assured, in taking headers during the summer months. Cold as the day was, one of the three was more than half immersed when I saw them, and all were in the highest state of health and condition. The great birds—the ostriches, the emus, etc.—were in magnificent plumage; so were the hawks, far better than our own, though worse lodged; their cages were quite unworthy of them. There is a pair of condors that would make a morning meal of those in our gardens, fine as they are, and think nothing of it. In the aquarium, which, though poorly furnished, presents the same

appearance of a thorough acquaintance with the habits and requirements of the fish, I saw nothing very remarkable, but I learned that many fresh-water fish—the common eel, for instance, minnows, sticklebacks, and gudgeons—would live just as well in salt water as in fresh. There is but one elephant, a fine beast, which takes his station opposite the bun shop, not for buns, but for pennies to buy them with, expending such as are given to him with great discrimination.

The lake itself, though, is the great feature of the place; cranes and storks wander along the margin, ducks of various kinds dot the surface, coots and moorhens nestle in the weeds, dabchicks, and divers perpetually turn up their comical little tails and seek their food in the depths below, whilst gulls of all sorts, geese of varied breed and strange plumage, dark, uncanny cormorants, and splendid pelicans, float at their ease on the still surface of the water. The garden is a pleasant place, and great credit is due to its managers. I wish that our Council would from their superfluity grant some much-wanted aid to their poorer brethren. Our Zoo has *too much* money at its disposal.

“Did I ever tell you,” asks Jack Brag, “what

my father did when he lost a hundred-pound note?"

"No," says Lord Tom, not much caring.

"Went home and *got another.*"

When we lose a valuable bird or beast, we just go to Jamrach, or somebody else, and "*get another.*"

A FEW PRACTICAL HINTS ON HORSE DEALING.

EXCEPTING to sell, there are few more difficult things than to buy a horse. A few hints derived from the practical experience of some forty years, during which I have always been owner of from two to five horses of all sorts, and adapted—at least, used—for all purposes, may not be out of place, or entirely useless to my readers.

“A buyer,” some one somewhere says, “has need of a hundred eyes; the seller, but of one.” It is to the former, therefore, that I address myself; and without any expectation of adding the extra ninety-and-eight, I may hope, to some extent, to open the two he now possesses.

“Never buy a horse of a friend,” is a maxim I have insisted on elsewhere; *à fortiori*, “never buy of a stranger.” The markets for the intended horse keeper are, therefore, restricted to three sources—horse dealers, commission agents, or public auction. The first two are in many respects similar—at least, the same knowledge is required for both; the principal dogma I would enforce is, to be quite sure you know *what* it is you want; it

is astonishing how much trouble would be saved, and how much disappointment avoided, if gentlemen would really ascertain that point for themselves *before* they enter a dealer's or commission agent's yards. There is a story told by Old Jorrocks in *Handley Cross*, of a dealer who, after showing an undecided customer all sorts of horses, adapted for all sorts of work, which had been, one after the other, declined, insisted upon running down a *cow* for inspection. Many men go into a yard without any definite idea whether it is a horse or a cow they want.

Assuming you know what you are really looking for, assuming you have plenty of money, and assuming you to be acquainted with an honest dealer—by no means so rare a being as people are in the habit of supposing—no teaching is necessary; in fact, the less you know the better. Do not be ashamed of confessing the ignorance you enjoy in common with at least ninety-nine out of a hundred of your fellow creatures; on the contrary, acknowledge it, state your want, be it hack, hunter, or harness horse, and confide in the dealer as you would in any other tradesman. I do not say refuse a warranty, though I would, personally, neither ask for nor give one; but, warranted or not, if you are prepared to pay a good price, it is

to the dealer's interest to supply you with a good horse, if he have one ; and should the animal not turn out what you expected, whether warranted or not, the seller will take him back, change and exchange again, until you *are* suited. This, as I have said, is the simplest, the least troublesome, and many think, in the end, the cheapest plan. I know of no more unfair or unmerited stigma than that which, in the minds of many, attaches to the trade of horse dealing. There are, of course, low and dishonest dealers in horses, as there are in all commodities, but the body is not to be judged by them. There are probably as good an average of honest, high-minded men in that trade as in any other, but they labour under great disadvantages. Their traffic is in the most uncertain, varying, and hard-to-judge-of article in existence. A goldsmith can assay his gold, or test his silver ; very moderate experience will enable the merchant to judge the quality of wine, or silk, or wool ; a timber dealer knows a sound log when he sees it ; but the most astute and long-practised of horse dealers may fail to discover hidden defects in a colt, and young horses he must have, for his customers insist upon having them young, though, in by far the greater number of instances, a seasoned old one, if sound, would suit them ten

times better. Then there are the infantile diseases to which horseflesh is heir, more numerous possibly than those which afflict our own babies ; there are the results of change of diet, change of treatment, change of water, to be guarded against ; and finally the dealer has to contend with the ignorance of the purchaser, more commonly still of his groom, and with the whims and fancies of both. A horse dealer is after all a man, liable, as all men are, to err in judgment, and, as I have said, may have overlooked a latent defect in his purchase. If it be so, he pays the penalty, whether unsoundness or vice appear in course of nature or brought on by injudicious treatment ; the warranty is at once resorted to, the animal, which has suffered not only in quality but in character, is returned, and the loss is pocketed if the seller be wise ; for when did a horse dealer ever get justice at the hands of a British jury ? A cab-driver might as well expect it at those of a police magistrate.

I have touched on this the first part of my subject at greater length than I intended, but I will treat the second more briefly. The commission agent acts the part of a broker, or go-between only. His business is much more simple than that of the dealer, and there are many advantages in purchasing from a yard of established reputation.

One great one is that you get *no warranty*, and in consequence, if you make a bad purchase, the mischief ends there; you don't buy a lawsuit into the bargain. In lieu of a warranty, you will generally be shown the owner's description, and should he be unknown to you, it may be well worth inquiring *his* character before you accept, implicitly, that he gives to his horse. A veterinary examination is also allowed, and if, as stated before, you really know what you want, it is more than probable you may be suited equally well from a commission stable as from a horse-dealer's yard, and at less than half the cost.

The third, and, to my mind, the best mode of purchasing a horse remains—that is, “at auction”; and here some practical suggestions cannot but be of use to such purchasers as may have had little experience in the art—for art it is, of horse dealing. Of course, it is open to the buyer to employ a “vet.” to examine the animal he proposes to buy, but that begs the whole question; I am speaking to those who buy on their own judgment. Besides, so long as you pay a man ten-and-sixpence to pick holes in a horse, it will probably be a good while before you buy one at all. Incipient spavins, curby hocks, light bone, flat feet, splints, thrushes, blemishes, will be pointed out or suggested, until

you wonder where and how any mortal has ever succeeded in buying a sound horse. Yet sound horses are to be bought, and good horses; and at Tattersall's, amongst unsound and bad ones, many are sold every Monday in the year. If you reflect how many of your friends have sold really valuable horses at comparatively low prices, it must be obvious that bargains are to be had—occasionally, at least—at the Albert Gate establishment.

As a rule, unless you are personally acquainted with the animals and their owner, avoid “studs.” It is a too common practice to send up ten or twelve horses—at the end of the season especially—without the least intention, on the owner's part, of selling a single good one out of the lot. The large reserved prices up to which those reserves are run spreads a halo of fictitious value over their stable companions, and many a horse is knocked down at one or two hundred guineas, which, had he come out early as “a bay, or brown gelding,” would not have realized thirty. Besides, there is always the danger, when you purchase from the stable of a well-known rider across country, that you may “buy the *fiddle*, but not the *fiddle-stick*.”

Horses are rarely—intentionally, at least—“warranted” at Tattersall's; but sometimes a seller does

this through ignorance of the effect of the words he uses in his description, and more frequently a purchaser thinks he has a warranty when none is really given. "A good hunter" implies a good deal; sound in wind, reasonably quiet to ride, sound in eyes; but he may be as lame as you please. Of course he ought to gallop and jump; but the first is a relative quality, and the last depends a good deal on the hand and nerve of the rider. "A good hack" is about as dangerous a description as can be given. It implies the absence of every fault and the presence of every virtue in horse nature. "A good hack" is sound all over; he neither shies, nor kicks, nor rears, nor stumbles; he is quiet, temperate, and light in hand. I trust readers will think twice before they enter a horse for sale as "a good hack." "Quiet in harness, or to ride," speaks for itself. The danger in such a warranty is in the chance of some unprincipled scoundrel purchasing the horse and designedly causing him to jib or kick when tried in harness or the saddle. Nothing is easier than to cause such a result in the quietest horse, and the animal, being returned, is bought, at half-price, by a confederate the next week. As a rule, the less said the better: "a bay gelding," "a brown mare," are descriptions which can hardly

be controverted, and save a deal of trouble. To warrant a horse "sound" at Tattersall's is folly. Every man, the moment he has purchased a horse, repents of having done so, and looks out for the chance of returning him. A skilful and unscrupulous vet. will assuredly furnish him with a sufficient reason, or a sufficient ground; and then there is always the "cough" to fall back on—that "cough" so invariably attendant on a three days' sojourn at Tattersall's. How can it be otherwise? A horse is a hardy animal, and can stand change of temperature as well as any; but besides the unavoidable draughts when doors are constantly opened and shut, a good-looking horse is in and out every ten minutes, and is exposed, besides, to the brutal throat-pinchings which every lounge about the yard seems to consider he is entitled, with or without reason or object, to inflict on the poor beast, which is, not uncommonly, seriously injured by the process. A horse described as "a hunter," as we have said, is warranted as to his wind, and he at least ought not to be subjected to this process.

Why do not Messrs. Tattersall and Paine, both humane as well as clever men, stop it? they could do so, if they pleased, at once, and by the exercise of their own undoubted and recognized authority

in their own yard. I venture to suggest the following course: let a competent veterinary be employed, let him examine at the vendor's expense, for a moderate fee, say five shillings, any horse whose wind is intended to be warranted, and permit no "pinching" to be inflicted on horses that have passed the ordeal.

To pass from generals to particulars, we will assume that some confiding reader, unblest with a groom whose sanction he is bound to obtain, or critical friend, of whose opinion, to be given after the result, he stands in awe, has determined to purchase, on his own judgment, a horse at Tattersall's.

He will walk, say on Saturday afternoon, quietly through the earlier numbered stables; the later ones are mostly occupied by studs, with the individual members of which, unless he has some personal knowledge, he had, as we have before said, better not meddle. Having selected a horse apparently suitable to his purpose, he refers to his catalogue; he finds him described as "a good hunter," more probably as "well known with the Blankshire hounds." In the first case, as I have stated, the animal is "warranted" as to the eyes and wind, two main points which greatly simplify the matter, but excepting that more caution is neces-

sary, it need not be assumed that the other animal is unsound in either respect.

Many persons have such a horror of anything approaching a "warranty," they would hardly venture to describe an animal as "a bay mare." It is as well to watch the horse's movements carefully, though unobtrusively, for some minutes before you examine him. If he be a wind-sucker or a cribber—detestable vices—he will assuredly show it, the more so that you are observing him, for they are both *nervous* tricks. If he have a "favourite" leg, he will probably rest it; and remember that the smallest indication of "pointing" is proof, positive and absolute, of unsoundness.

If no such signs appear, walk boldly but quietly up, speaking to him as you go; your catalogue has been thrust into your pocket, and you have neither stick, whip, nor umbrella in your hand wherewith to terrify him.

The first point to ascertain is his height, a most difficult one to judge of without actual measurement in large, lofty stables, like those of Tattersall's. Indeed, there are few things more deceptive than the apparent height of a horse, under any circumstances. Standing close to his shoulder, bring your nose down till it touch the skin below the withers. This, assuming your height to be

about five feet nine inches, will show as nearly fifteen hands as possible: the excess, three, four, or five inches, is readily calculated. I consider a trifle under sixteen hands about the best height for a hunter. You will then look into his eye, which should be clear, reflecting, as in a mirror, the image of your own sweet self. It is impossible to judge accurately of the moral qualities of a horse under such circumstances; but if, when you "gentle" him, he answers to the caress by arching his neck, and poking his nose into your hand, you may be assured that he is quiet, at least in the stable, and has kept good company. A white mark on the upper part of the throat betokens a cribber; it has been caused by the strap used to check that objectionable and readily communicated habit. A like mark above the hock indicates a kicker in the stable, swelled hocks a kicker out of it as well. A mark on the knee speaks for itself; "let no such horse be trusted."

The next point to ascertain is the horse's age; it is not probable you can do this accurately; but by placing your left hand gently on his nose, and passing your finger behind the tusk, you will ascertain its shape and dimensions; if long and round, the horse is old, if short and sharp, young; if short and ragged, the tusk has been broken, to give a fictitious appearance of youth; but the

sunken eye and hanging lip will, to a practised eye at least, afford an unerring proof of age. A young horse will probably not object to your examining the rest of his teeth, and although you may not know his age within a year or two, the black bean-like marks, if apparent, will at least show that the horse is young.

The fore legs are the next to be examined—a most important point. Pass your hand down the front of each, clasping the bone with finger and thumb. If clean and smooth, and flat and cool, it is all right. A slight bony excrescence, known as a splint, if not touching or very near to the sinews, is not of much account, but a horse should have what are called “clean” legs. The sinews themselves should stand out firm, hard, and prominent. Broken knees you will, of course, be on the look out for.

A more important matter still is the shape or conformation of the hoof; on it, in fact, depends the whole practical utility of the horse, and on no portion of his anatomy is the meddlesome stupidity of man, who thinks he knows better what is for the benefit of the animal than his Maker, more mischievously employed. Externally, the hoof should slope at an angle of forty-five; if less, the hoof is too upright; if more, too flat. Internally, it will too frequently be found on examination that the

beautiful mechanism of nature has been cruelly and wickedly destroyed. The frog has been pared away, the bars removed, the heels lowered, the whole anatomy of the foot destroyed. Unless in very young horses, the mischief is irremediable, and sooner or later, now or shortly, the horse is ruined. "No foot, no horse," has been a maxim time out of mind; "No 'ock, no 'unter," was Mr. Jorrocks's amendment. We heartily endorse both axioms. Look well at the hocks; but we must admit that you may look very carefully and still be no whit the wiser, for the hock is the most difficult point to judge of, and requires considerable experience to do so effectually.

Better now have the animal "pulled out," "run down," "walked down," and "trotted down," on the stones. Regard him with a jealous eye, and if no sign of lameness appear, make up your mind to what extent, within his apparent value, you mean to bid, and don't be tempted *to bid beyond it*. Unless well known, a horse sells at auction, as a rule, at less than two-thirds his apparent value, on account of the manifold risks the purchaser runs. You have the third in hand, by way of insurance, and it is generally sufficient—at least I have so found it.

THE BLIND FISHERMAN.

ST. BOSWELL'S can hardly be called a gay town, far less a fashionable one, but it is a pleasant place to abide at ; there is a thriving, well-to-do aspect about it, and the children, who, in proportion to the population, far exceed any statistical calculation, are the healthiest, bonniest, and apparently happiest little mortals I have ever come across. The town comprises one long straggling street, the houses are generally comfortable, many of a superior class, the appearance of the worst excluding any idea of poverty. The "Green," which faces *the* inn, is a pleasant rustic memory of such as commonly existed fifty years since, but now, alas ! too rare. It is large and comfortable, the excellent and indefatigable landlady, although at times making invidious comparisons between Scotch customs and those of her own country, caters equally for the wants of all, and makes her permanent lodgers exceptionally comfortable. "Fair Tweed " embraces, as it were, in one grand curve the whole town, approaching it closely on either side, and there is no more beautiful portion of that beautiful river.

It was here that, a few years since, having, through the kindness of an old and valued friend, permission to fish, I first made the acquaintance of William Ranken, to my mind one of the most extraordinary characters I have ever met. Deprived of sight for more than twenty years, he has by the force of intellect and strong will almost supplied the terrible defect. Knowledge, as in the case of the great blind poet, "from one entrance quite shut out," has been admitted from other and extraneous ones; memory and the gift of touch have, to a great extent, taken the place and done the duty of sight. William Ranken, unattended, or accompanied only by his dog, will find his way to any portion of the river within the distance of a mile and upwards, and, fishing with either fly or minnow, catch during the day more trout—very many more—than any stranger to the water, however gifted, and at least as many as the most skilful of the local fishermen blessed with eyesight. It is strange to see him feeling his way, step by step, along the steep bank of the river, casting his line before him as he goes, sensitive to the slightest touch, hooking fish after fish, playing them in the most artistic manner, and in due time transferring them to his creel. It is even more strange to see him wading, mid-leg deep, in the rapid stream

where a step or two in the wrong direction would inevitably result in his being carried away by it.

The danger, however, is, I believe, more apparent than real; he treads not "in doubt and dread," but with a thorough knowledge of his whereabouts, and the relative position of bank and pool and eddy. I firmly believe he knows not only every rock, but every stone in the bed of the river of sufficient size to create a ripple on the surface. His sense of hearing is as acute and discriminating as that of touch. I meet him at intervals of perhaps a year or two, but he never fails to distinguish my tread, despite the noise of the water, and at the first sound of my voice climbs up the bank, as though every bush and rush and weed upon it were apparent, to greet me with a welcome grasp of his hand, and talk over the news of the day, with which he is always well acquainted.

Having basketed a fish, he tests the condition and efficiency of his tackle with the greatest accuracy, repairs any defect, and refixes the minnow or the fly with an artistic accuracy which many a disciple of the gentle art might in vain hope to emulate.

During the winter months, or when the water is not in order—an occurrence which, thanks to the accursed pollutions allowed to foul the stream, is

but too common—he employs his time in making fly-rods, and one of the best in my possession is the work of the blind man ; the whipping, which I have frequently seen him do, is of the most accurate and finished description.

Like most blind men, William Ranken has a cheerful, though slightly subdued, expression of countenance ; his conversation is that of an intelligent, if not of a highly-educated man, and his observations are always to the point and worthy of notice. It is curious, when they relate to subjects connected with the weather, the water, and the chances of sport—topics sure to arise between fishermen at the water-side—he expresses himself as though in full possession of his eyesight.

“They’ll no rise the noo to the flee ;” “She’s just a wee bit ower dirty ;” or, “’Deed she is clearing fine, I’d change the minnow for the flee ;” or, “They’re gaen off the rise this hour or more, but I’m thinking they’ll come on again when the sun gets behind yon cloud ;” “The fash are no taking weel, they just come up and look at the flee, and wunna lay hold,” and so on. It is hardly possible, whilst talking to him, to bear in mind that he is *dark*, but when you look at his eyes you see at once that there is “no speculation in them,” it is the light of intellect alone that guides him.

On returning home he calls his dog, a wise-looking black retriever, and fastening a string to his collar, commits himself in some sort to his guidance. I observed, however, that, although the dog preceded and led the way homeward, he was constantly checked or reminded that he was too much on this side or on that, and sometimes his proposed course was entirely changed. To my suggestion that he would do as well without a dog, he replied that no doubt such was the case, but that the carters and others who travelled the road, and who were sometimes—I fancy frequently, “gey foo,” recognized him by his dog, and abstained from running him down. William Ranken keeps a general shop in the main street of St. Boswell’s, where not only fishing tackle of the best quality can be obtained, but haberdashery, bags, baskets, and other matters useful to the tourist. I earnestly recommend any of my readers who may pass a few hours or days in the town to visit the shop and make the acquaintance of “the blind fisherman of St. Boswell’s.”

CROSSING SWEEPERS.

"IF that sweeper touch his hat to me this morning, I'll give him sixpence!" The sweeper *did* touch his hat, and received, with undisguised surprise, the proffered gratuity. "It is twelve years to-day," explained my friend, "since first I passed over this crossing, on my way to the City, and that man has never failed to salute me, though I never gave him a farthing before."

My first impression was that the sweeper had earned his sixpence rather hardly; but, on consideration, that gave way to one of mitigated admiration at the generosity of the giver. The streets are open, I argued (excepting those in the aristocratic neighbourhood of Russell Square), why should man, woman, or cripple—the boys and girls have somehow of late disappeared—be permitted to levy blackmail upon lawful travellers under any pretence? As for the touch of the hat, Beau Brummell, the real *arbiter elegantiarum* his august master desired to be, who, though a coxcomb, was no fool, settled the question long ago. To touch your hat, he declared, in return for a sweeper's salutation, if you give him aught is superfluous, if

not, a mockery ! The filthy state of the roadway, however, suggested an answer to the previous question, and I sighed for the coming day when public streets, like private pathways, will be periodically swept and cleansed. Meanwhile we are, to some extent, dependent upon these volunteers for our comfort ; and whether daily, weekly, yearly, or once in twelve years, are morally bound to pay them.

It becomes, therefore, a matter of importance that they should be regulated and placed under control. I doubt the legal right of "Jack Rag" to "shut up shop" when he retires from business for the night ; that is, "to sweep the dirt over again." I protest against a protruded grimy hand, or a hoarse ginnified voice, distracting my attention as I step "in doubt and dread" across the crowded street, and would have the public paths made clean by a humble class of public servants. I have no wish to interfere with vested interests. There are crossing-sweepers who have acquired, from long occupancy, a good "holding title" to their property. The sturdy, pimple-faced sailor, for instance, who, having lost both his "blessed pins" in some long-forgotten naval engagement, stumps along on two wooden substitutes, and sweeps the crossing from Clarendon Place to

the opposite park entrance. I have known that worthy, personally, for forty years, and respect him as a man of property. I have reason to believe he has an interest in the British funds, and contributes to the income-tax. The black man, who was so particular about his rumpsteaks, in Bond Street, is gone, as is that poor hectic personification of famine and decayed gentility in the Edgeware Road; but there is the cripple at one corner of Portman Square. I knew him also many, many years since, when, as a boy, he crept up and down Southampton Row, twisting his head from side to side in a grotesque manner, making hideous faces, and affecting to sell lucifer matches. There is a ruffianly-looking fellow, better, we trust, than his appearance would lead a physiognomist to suppose, near Portland Place, and two Irish ladies by Montagu Square, whose wondrous repertory of blessings, poured out on the smallest provocation, suggests the capability of producing a very different vocabulary on requirement. I repeat, I would not meddle with these, or such as these; they are old abuses, and should be tolerated, so long as they individually last: but why should not a "Sweeper Brigade" be founded on the principle of the Shoe-black Brigade? I throw out the hint for the consideration of the benevolent. Hundreds, perhaps

thousands, of lads now earn a fair amount as shoe-blacks, or in the still more humble capacity of minor street scavengers, who, a few years since, would have earned their living as thieves and pick-pockets ; but there are hundreds and thousands still ready and willing to work for the smallest wage. It would be a work of public utility, as well as Christian charity, to organize such a gang, clothe them in a livery of coloured flannel, endow them with a broom each, instal them in such unoccupied crossings as are sufficiently frequented to give a fair chance of remunerative wages, and place a well-secured iron box handy, into which the coppers might be dropped by such liberal and thoughtful persons, and there are many such, as believe that, however humble the employment, "it is better to work than to live idle ; better to *sweep* than *thieve*."

THE FIRST OF OCTOBER.

IT is the first day's pheasant shooting of the season, and it is only intended to kill some of the most forward of the outlying birds. The high wood is of course out of the question, for there is scarcely the sign of approaching decay on the still green and massive foliage of the oak ; the nuts alone of the underwood, and the beech of forest trees, show signs of falling into the "sere and yellow leaf."

Ranging ourselves, therefore, under the direction of our intelligent keeper, whose powers of combination and prudent arrangement would, in another sphere, have made him a general at least, with our backs to the high wood, which has been hastily brushed through by the beaters, we commence our advance in a line, a beater, with a long stick in his hand, between each gun. The "beaters," by the way, are admirably drilled ; they neither shout nor chatter ; each seems bent on his work, and fully alive to the truth of Mr. Belt the keeper's warning, that noise only makes the game "head back," and that quiet poking beneath is far more effectual to dislodge the objects of our pursuit, than noisy

thrashing above. As we struggle out of the embraces of a too loving brier, a whirr is heard, and with the hoarse cry of "Mark!" comes a warning voice,

"Let 'em rise! let 'em rise!"

Our friend is not unmindful of the small boys at the end of the "young cut," who call him father, and whose somewhat monotonous business is to keep up a constant "click! click!" by striking one stick upon another, and so to "stop" the pheasants from running ingloriously away instead of standing fire as a bold "pheasantry" ought. As is often the case with men, to avoid an imaginary danger they incur a real one. *Bang! bang!* in rapid succession, but the bird, at least, has taken Belt's warning to heart, and has risen so rapidly that, save for the loss of a feather or two, he has sailed triumphantly away, and now chuckles out his satisfaction in the safe refuge of the distant high wood.

"If, Master Harry," our friend quietly remarks, "you *will* shoot at them long tails of theirs, they will fly away."

Master Harry reloads, and mutters something about "nearly out of shot," and "couldn't get the gun up for the brambles."

Indifferent shots, by the way, always consider it

necessary to furnish a reason—we must not say an excuse—for every miss they make ; good shots, never. Again, “Mark !” is heard, and this time, even with greater energy than when the boy’s safety was assumed to be at stake, “’Ware hen !” is shouted, bringing down two guns at least that had been hastily raised from the “present” to their original position of “make ready.”

The plot thickens ; birds rise and fall, birds rise and escape. One or two “runners” are admirably retrieved by a sagacious old dog, of the red Irish spaniel breed, who walks unrestrained at the keeper’s heels, and appears to criticise the proceedings in a somewhat fastidious spirit. The result of two hours’ shooting, besides rabbits, is some nine brace of birds, mostly cocks, the few hens which chequer the line, as they lie on the grass, consisting of obstinate and rather ungrateful birds who would persist in flying “the wrong way,” on to open land, where they would inevitably have been ignominiously shot by unauthorized persons. They were, in fact, killed to save their credit.

We now adjourn to luncheon, which we find set out in the ample kitchen of the farmhouse close at hand, and to which we are most hospitably invited by the ill-used individuals whose crops have been devoured by the “vermin” stretched before us,

whose feelings have been outraged, whose fences have been broken down by tyrannical landlord and tyrannical landlord's friends. If Mr. Smith be an injured and dissatisfied man, he has the happiest knack of dissembling his feelings. His welcome, as we have said, is most cordial, his luncheon most excellent. On the table there is a ham, a fat pork pie, home-made bread, capital cheese and butter, and jugs of ale that cream over the sides, on the sideboard sundry long-necked bottles. His principal subject of discourse, next to pressing us to eat and drink, is the expression of satisfaction at the promise of good sport this little prelude to the shooting promises.

And now, Mr. Odger (I address you personally, because you are the self-appointed redresser of the farmer's wrongs in this matter of game ; because you write, and speak, and parade statistics about the injury inflicted on the country at large by game ; because I consider you a really well-intentioned and a talented man, only labouring under the disadvantage—a not uncommon one—of teaching what you have not learnt, of talking about what you do not understand)—what harm have we done ? wherein are we to blame ? We have passed a pleasant day in the enjoyment of a healthful occupation, in fine air and in fine scenery ; we have

disbursed certain moneys in railway and other fares ; we have added some stones of good food to the general stock ; we have paid half a dozen honest labourers half-a-crown each, and given them a capital dinner ; and we have exercised a highly-skilled art which you would not exercise, you tell us, if you could—which you could not exercise, I tell you, if you would.

THE FIRST OF FEBRUARY.

THE four months that have passed since our opening day on the first of October, have wrought as great a change in the aspect of nature, as forty years might have done in that of the youth who is recorded elsewhere as having vexed Mr. Belt's spirit by "shooting at their long tails."

"The oak that in summer was sweet to hear,
And rustled its leaves in the fall of the year,"

is now leafless, gaunt, and bare ; the rampant bramble that took toll of our garments, and lacerated our flesh, has been "sat upon," pressed flat, by the superincumbent snow, and lies groveling on the earth. The old man's beard, that, "hanging so light, and hanging so high," flaunted airily above, has a ragged, hungry, and wasted look ; the pine branches, snapped short off by the weight of the same snow that flattened the brambles, bristle above our heads—

"There is nothing green upon the oak,
But moss——."

"Rarest misletoe" is *so* rare, we have never either seen it, or know anyone who has seen it, growing on the oak.

There is a complete change too in the description of birds that come under our notice: the swallows, with the latest of our summer visitants, have long since sought warmer climes; and besides the familiar redbreast, few are seen in the woods but the dapper brown-coated wren, the parti-coloured nuthatch, or happy family parties of the ubiquitous tribe of tits. I love to watch these pretty useful little birds as they flit from tree to tree, fearless and confiding, creeping, climbing, twisting, twining in and out, clinging head downwards, topsy-turvy, and peeping into every crevice and cranny wherein the egg or cocoon of some noxious insect may be concealed—but I am wandering from my subject.

Great as was the strategy displayed by Mr. Belt in October, it is far greater now there is more need of it. There is scant cover, the woods are hollow, the game is wild, and has not failed to profit by experience; not a hare but knows the meaning of the once mysterious “tap! tap! click! click!” of the sticks of the small boys, so judiciously posted at every point from whence they were wont to wander forth to “fresh woods and pastures new”; not a pheasant but has rued the day that he trusted so confidingly to Mr. Belt’s disinterested protection, and learned to fly from it.

“Run forward, sir, run forward!” whispers that astute individual; “the hares are on the move already. Run forward; you’ll see a cross ride, a goodish bit on—get into the middle, and when the beaters come up, get on to the next.”

Equally clear directions are given to the other “guns,” and before the first quiet but excited cries, “Hare to the right!” “Rabbit back!” are heard, we are at our post.

It is nervous work, waiting for the approach of the game, but the excitement is pleasurable in the extreme. Very slowly the beaters approach; they are not indeed within earshot, and so still do I stand that a little red mouse runs fearlessly across my foot.

As we wait thus silent and solitary, we may perhaps moralize within ourselves on the nature of our occupation, and the questions raised as to its strict legitimacy, on the score of humanity and political economy. Mr. Freeman, in the Christian charity of his heart, has branded all sportsmen as bloodthirsty, cruel butchers, delighting in the pain they inflict, and revelling in the slaughter of their victims. Mr. Odger has declared them to be selfish destroyers of the people’s food; “*nati*” not only “*consumere fruges*,” but to protect and increase the birds and beasts created, as he considers,

only to devour the substance of his much-loved people.

Surely both are wrong. Man, the lord of the fowl and the brute, has been from the beginning endued with the love of sporting, and whether he has had the opportunity of cultivating it or not, I have never known one worthy of the name that did not possess it ; I firmly believe that the noblest acts of war and chivalry have had their origin in that instinctive love. Cruelty ! nonsense ! Ten times the fear and dread of death, which in the lower animals at least is the only *real* pain of death, are experienced by the doomed fowl hunted round the yard that its neck may be wrung, than by the shot pheasant ; and the latter has had ten times more pleasure in life.

But hush ! they come at last ; a noisy blackbird dashes across the ride, exulting shrilly in what he believes to be an escape from an attack especially directed against his worthless self. A couple of screaming jays keep up a discordant but intelligible dialogue as they flit along above the tops of the trees, occasionally making a feint of settling, and ever approaching, but still keeping jealously out of shot ; wisely so, for the jay's wing is much desired for the breast of some of our best Tweed flies.

And now, with a rapid but desultory movement,

in a series of short jumps, an old hare approaches, plainly heard before she is seen, for her feet fall by no means noiselessly on the rustling leaves. She is running straight towards us, but in mid-career she stops short, sitting up on her haunches, and listening with absorbing anxiety to the supposed danger approaching from behind. Now is she a fair mark, and now "could we do it pat!" but we disdain such inglorious work. Whistling slightly we stamp, and as the hare rushes wildly to the right, roll her over and over till she rests against an old nut stump, "what was once a hare." A medical examination would disclose the cause of death to be "a shot wound on the left side of the cranium, immediately behind the left ear." A couple of rabbits that have crept up silently and unseen, and have skulked behind a stump, make a bold rush for safety and dash across together; we allow them to pass, and as they do so slay the foremost in the ride, and his companion in the cover behind us, for the beaters are now approaching, and we shun firing forward; their lives and limbs are sacred in our eyes. "Mark cock!" "Woodcock, forward!" bang, bang, bang! a dozen barrels are emptied; everyone fires who sees him, some who do not. The stupid blundering bird has run the gauntlet, and well nigh made good his escape, for the practice is bad when the excite-

ment is great ; he sinks at last, perhaps out of compliment, for it is difficult to find a wound when picked up.

“Whose bird ?”

“Mine, I think !”

“No, he dropped to my — !”

“Whose bird, Belt ?”

“Your lordship’s, *I* should say,” replies Mr. Belt, who is something of a courtier.

And now the end is nigh. We have “gone forward” many times since the commencement of the day’s shooting, and have occupied commanding positions in many cross rides ; we have stopped sundry rocketers, slain many hares, and a hecatomb of rabbits, and now the guns are stationed in rather close proximity to each other, in a semicircle at the corner of the cover up to which the pheasants have been gradually driven.

The small boys who have ‘stood so patiently for hours tapping sticks are withdrawn, and the birds must face their real enemies standing before them, instead of the harmless lads that have scared them, and prevented them from seeking their places of refuge.

“Spare hens !” is now roared out by Mr. Belt, “spare hens !” “Let ‘em rise,” vociferates our

host ; and half a dozen hen birds at once test the validity of the ukase in their favour.

One miscalculating young cock, forgetful of his recent change in plumage, of which but yesterday he was so proud, rises with them, and falls at once, with at least three charges in his body.

“Hen ! hen !” and a fresh lot rises, this time accompanied by several cocks, the majority of which die in the air, and more than one hen, shot either intentionally or by accident, falls with them. The fun waxes fast and furious ; many birds die in the air at once, and a dozen fall together.

“Go slowly, beaters !” shouts Belt ; “draw up on the right—stand still on the left—be steady !” Another and still another “rise” ensues, until the beaters, hot, tired, and thirsty, emerge, grinning, and pick up the birds which strew the field around,—and then to luncheon !

CUB HUNTING.

WHERE is the meet to-day? Five miles off, at 6.30 A.M., and the clock has told six ere we issue from the stable-yard, the old horse snorting and pawing, the young one plunging and lashing out in a style that makes us thankful that we *have* five miles to go before he is introduced to the pack.

What a blessed time the early morning is! I don't mean to fall into sentimentalities, but the early morning *is* a blessed time, and I pity the man who cannot appreciate it.

The sun has not yet risen,
But the morn lies red on the dew !

The soppy ground reeks as the temperature rises ; the early birds are busily seeking the still earlier worms ; the cocks crow ; the lazy sparrows chirp ; the teams are driving afield ; the water-carts—for water this season is scarce, despite the recent rains—are at work, and the tollman—representative of a mischievous anachronism—winks and blinks while he pockets the pence : we canter along towards the meet.

Five miles, and thirty minutes to do it in ! but

the persistent rain has softened the ground, and the grass of the roadside is thick with scrapings, and carpeted with rushes ; we travel at a merry pace, and arrive at one side of the old windmill just as the hounds trot up to the other.

A pretty sight on a grey morning is the meet for cubbing ; there is little show, indeed ; it is all work that is meant. The servants of the hunt wear their old liveries ; rough animals carry them, and there is an entire absence of that "pomp and circumstance," that faultless "get up" which characterises the legitimate fixtures in the season. But there are the hounds, thirty couples out, mostly puppies, but with them are wise old hounds, the Nestors of the pack, whose business it is to "teach the young idea how to shoot," that is, how to hunt *exclusively* the wily animal. We have hardly time to look over the speckled beauties ; "they are of all tongues and creeds," for a horrible mishap occurred at the entry. A mad puppy had been admitted ; he had bitten some of his brethren ; he might have bitten all. The risk was too fearful to endure, and all—bitten or not bitten—like Herod's babies, had been doomed. Poor puppies ! poor puppies ! With Æneas of old, scarcely can I refrain from weeping, "*talia fando*," as I tell the tale. They were led forth, one by one, each wag-

ging his tail, and fondling the trusted hand that led him. Each was blindfolded in turn, and each was slain by a single blow from a heavy bludgeon.

Poor puppies ! poor puppies ! but it was a stern necessity. Hydrophobia is too horrible a disease to be trifled with—it must be “stamped out,” and it was.

Our entry, therefore, is like the old Roman’s library, *undique coempti*, and as good oftentimes comes out of evil, perhaps ultimately this may be for the better. The young hounds, gathered from half the kennels in England, comprise scions of the purest blood from the best packs amongst them—a lashing, and, on the whole, a level lot they look.

Our first draw is a thick wood, bristling with briers, waving with bracken, and at intervals glorious with lofty pines, broad beeches, and stately oaks. We canter forward, and, turning up a ride at an angle, wait, silent and expectant. The good old horse that has carried us so truly for many a season, with arched crest, open nostrils, and projected ears, though trembling in every limb, stands still as his rider, and scarcely, save by a shiver, shows that he is conscious of the light whimper that falls upon our ear. A whimper ! a howl ! a cry ! a crash ! Sixty hounds are throwing their tongues at once, and the glorious melody draws nearer and

nearer. The sound of the horn and the huntsman's cheery voice is heard, and our heart beats wildly as, with straining eyes, we watch for the fox to cross.

In a second, with a rush and a bound, he is over—the *fox*?—no! an outlying buck, which has got up before the pack, and is flying for his life. It is a beautiful sight

“To see the wild stag how he stretches
The natural buckskin of his breeches,”

and it is almost equally so to see a buck dashing through the thick undergrowth of a wood.

He appears to be possessed of strength and vigour far beyond his size; with nose protruded, and horns laid flat on his back, he dashes through the dense underwood as a rabbit would through the rushes. The pace is terrific; and as the scent is burning, the hounds run like hawks after their quarry. They are close to his haunches. The sight is so beautiful we could hardly have found it in our hearts to interfere; but our huntsman, though he has not seen the deer, knows by intuition what is going on, and horn and holloa, rate and whip, soon stop the glorious but unlicensed chase.

It is useless drawing farther; the cover harbours more deer, lately escaped from a neighbouring

park ; and we trot off three miles farther to another wood ; low-lying, full of hazels and furze and bracken, and abounding in the dense thickets that foxes affect. Scarcely are the hounds in than a challenge is heard, which is speedily responded to ; the puppies, shyly at first, then boldly, like indifferent singers tempted to take part in a chorus, join in the cry. The land outside is all arable, lately ploughed, and affords splendid galloping. No fear in cub-hunting of heading the fox, so quitting the hard rides, we gallop along outside, and reach the end of the ride just in time to see the fox cross. The hounds are close at his brush, and as we yell out, "Tally ho ! over !" we feel we are twenty-five again. They drive him through the wood, and race him in view to a copse a short distance ahead. The hounds are through it like magic, and dashing out at the other end, stand for a moment staring foolishly at each other.

"Tally ho ! back !" "Tally ho ! back !" they turn like pigeons. Again the joyous burst ; again the chorus of canine voices ; and then—a lull. "Too ! too ! too ! who-oo ! Gone to ground !" The lithe cub has sought shelter in a rabbit-hole ; there let him rest. He will run another day, and we have not too many foxes.

"Blood" for hounds is, I firmly believe, unne-

cessary ; they run a scent from the instinctive love of exercising the wondrous powers given them by nature ; they run the scent of a fox neither more or less keenly than they would any other equally strong ; they have no *wish* to eat the brute ; no animal feeds on either fox or rat, save the rat or fox ; and, apart from the excitement of the chase, they have no more natural wish to kill the fox than the soldier has to kill his enemy after he has vanquished him. Masters of hounds ! huntsmen ! kill a fox when you can fairly kill a fox, but, I beseech you, spare him when once he has gone to ground. Let him live and run another day.

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THAT fox hunting is the noblest science that ever was invented, and that fox hunters approach perfection as nearly as it is possible for fallible human nature to do, no one will be bold enough to deny ; but, near as the approach is, we venture to hint that the *acmè* has not been reached. There *is* a weak point in the fox hunter's character, and we trust we may be excused for referring to it ; there is, deny it as we may, a *soupeçon* of *selfishness* inherent in his nature, and a lack of appreciation of the sacrifices made by others for his benefit, which detracts from his otherwise perfect character.

Far distant be the time when men gorgeous in scarlet coats, and rejoicing in miraculously fitting boots, bent on enjoyment, exulting in health, wild with excitement, shall be prevented from galloping over the well-kept lawns and carefully cultivated fields, the property of strangers, utterly unknown to and uncared for by them ! Far distant be the time when country gentlemen, unhappily deficient in the bump of *fox'untativeness*, as Mr. Jorrocks calls it, but delighting in shooting, shall cease to

preserve the noble animal that affords pleasure to so many of their fellow creatures ! But, that the coming of such a sad time may be retarded as far as possible, we earnestly entreat our friends and fellow fox-hunters to alter, and to some extent amend, their usual course of action.

From the days when Æsop wrote his fable of "The Wind and the Sun," illustrating the relative powers of force and persuasion, kind actions and soft words have been acknowledged by thinking men as more efficacious than hard knocks and vituperative appellations. We wish to see fox hunters more tolerant of those who are not fox hunters, and more grateful to them for ministering to their sport. We wish to see that ugly word *vulpicide* less frequently used, and less general abuse levelled at those who are, frequently without reason, suspected of the *crime* ? Let us not be misunderstood ; we are sportsmen to the backbone ; we have hunted from the day we could sit upon a pony until now that we have grown grey-haired, and have ceased to go to scale. We perhaps love the sport better than even in the heyday of our youth, for we understand it better ; but we are, and we feel no shame in confessing it, beyond measure grateful to those by whose sufferance, frequently at the cost of considerable self-sacrifice,

we enjoy it. We say "sufferance," for we are absolutely dependent on their forbearance.

The fox is by no means the crafty beast he is generally represented. Wily he is, and wonderfully clever in achieving his ends, generally felonious ones ; he is cool in danger, fertile in resources, and capable beyond any other animal of applying them for the purpose of escaping from it ; but he is essentially greedy, and his boldness makes him dangerously careless of the mode in which he satisfies his appetite. No animal, except the cat, is more easily trapped, or more readily poisoned. His habits too are uniform, and anyone acquainted with his haunts, who is so disposed, can shoot him on any moonlight night. The sport of a country side is, in fact, in the power of every owner of every cover within a certain limit—far more so in that of his keeper. Cold looks, abusive epithets, and sneering speeches, are not the weapons with which men having this power in their hands are to be met. We venture to suggest a totally different course—one which we know to be successfully adopted by many masters and many fox hunters in many counties, but not, as it should be, universally. It is the expression of confidence and gratitude and goodwill towards the owners of covers, and especially liberal treatment towards

their keepers ; the latter cannot be supposed to love their greatest enemy, and, honest though they may be, some sensible pecuniary benefit will greatly encourage their disposition to carry into effect their master's, possibly too mild, exhortation to preserve foxes.

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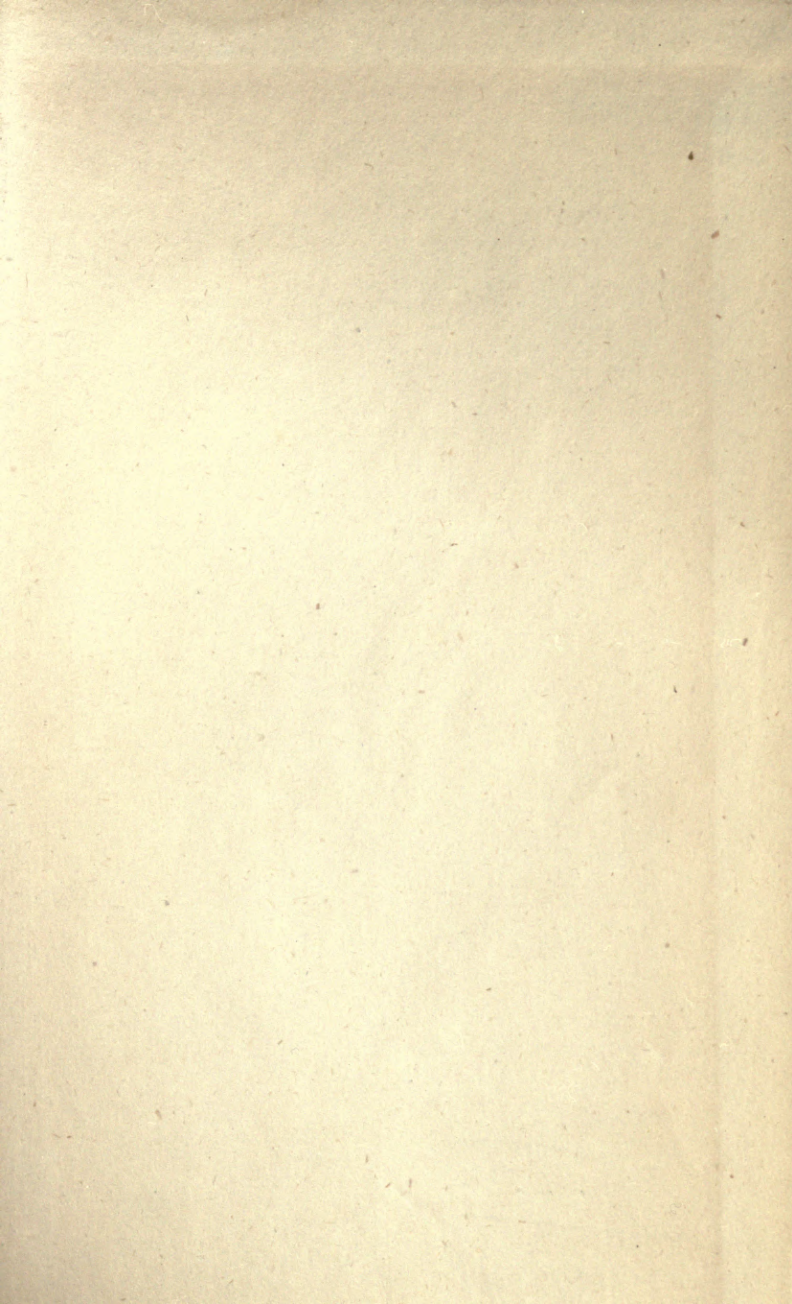
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